

*The Influence of Orally Performed Literature on
Thucydides' History and a Hypothesis of Partial
Publications during the Author's Lifetime*

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I declare that this thesis was composed by myself
and that the work contained therein is my own.
I also declare that this work has not been submitted
for any other degree or professional qualification
except as specified.

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between historiography and the public in the V century Greece is a matter of debate. The evidence available supports the hypothesis that parts of the work of Herodotus were read aloud before an audience. We also have information of performances of historical works during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but when we come to Thucydides, mainstream modern criticism assumes that the *History of the Peloponnesian War* was meant to be addressed to a reading public and circulated in writing. Thucydides' declaration that his work is intended to be a κτῆμα ἐς αἰεὶ and his critical attitude towards his predecessors' methods and objectives appear to support this idea. On the other hand if we look at the state of oral culture at that time and the practice followed by other contemporary and later historians, such a hypothesis would make Thucydides a striking exception.

While scholars generally are concerned with the way in which Thucydides innovates and differs from earlier authors, my thesis is concerned rather with what he has in common with them. My intention is to highlight the interrelationship between the work of Thucydides and the culture of his own time. That inquiry is conducted at two different levels.

First, I have tried to assess the extent to which Thucydides may have been influenced by a variety of literary works belonging to different genres. Each chapter focuses on a different possible source of influence: earlier historiography, in particular Herodotus; didactic poetry; tragedy; contemporary rhetoric; and medical and technical treatises. There emerges a variegated picture: a historian who is able to arrange his narrative so as to create different stylistic effects appropriate to the subject matter.

At the same time, I have tried to verify whether the presence of cross-links between the text of Thucydides and orally delivered works of literature might give us any indication of the way the *History of the Peloponnesian War* was intended to be transmitted to the public. My attention is focused on the question of the performability of Thucydides' work, and I have tried to identify self-contained separable sections that might originally have been suitable for separate performance and might later have been integrated into the whole work. I have looked for signs of inconsistency that might derive from later insertion of a section into the body of the work and for stylistic features that might have facilitated the understanding of self-contained sections when presented to an audience during or even after Thucydides' lifetime.

In brief, this research is an attempt to outline the interrelationship between the work of Thucydides and his own cultural background as regards literary influences and the place it occupies in the context of a culture where orality operates side by side with literacy as a medium of communication.

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Introduction

Perhaps more than any other historical work, Thucydides' description of the Peloponnesian War differs from a simple collection of raw facts: every single word in it seems to imply choice and arrangement; and this gives the reader the impression that, from beginning to end, a sure and certain hand is guiding him towards definite conclusions. And yet, it seems unlikely that his work should have been written as a whole from the start; and many points suggest a composition by several stages, with possible false starts and revisions.

J. De Romilly, Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism

Thucydides did not label his own work. It is we who have to do that, and we cannot answer the question "What was Thucydides doing?" by saying "He was an historian and so must have behaved in such and such a way". That Thucydides did not call the Peloponnesian War by that name does not matter very much except that it reminds us that there is no label on the work; that he did not call his work a "history" matters very much indeed. It means that we have no easy clue as to the kind of enterprise he thought he was engaged in.

S. Hornblower, Thucydides

There is no easy way to begin an analysis of the text of Thucydides. Over the centuries different interpretations have been put forward in an attempt to give the most adequate explanation for different problems raised by the text. The present attempt comes, therefore, last in the series and does not pretend to solve all the mysteries, but just to postulate an alternative approach to Thucydides. Somewhere between the two serious points raised by De Romilly and Hornblower as quoted at the beginning, lies the path of our research. What kind of enterprise - using the words of Hornblower- was Thucydides engaged in and how could we reasonably hypothesise that he set about writing the *History of the Peloponnesian War*? It is not my aim to take part in the endless discussion about the different stages of composition of the work. Many eminent scholars have already fully discussed that subject. My attention is rather directed to the concept of writing the account of the Peloponnesian War and to the nature of the account produced.

The process of writing down accounts of the past has developed through time to become in the last few centuries the normal way of conveying historical

information. Such a familiarity with written works might lead us to overlook the fact that writing has not always been the normal mode of transmission and that the habit of committing words to paper took some time to become a common practice. The contemporaries of Thucydides might have welcomed the appearance of a written and published work as a change of habit. The initial shifting from oral to written transmission must have had a revolutionary character. Such a character is difficult for us to imagine in our literate society.

Another aspect our age might underestimate is the importance of defining the boundary between what is historical and what is not historical. Nowadays we speak of social or economic or political history. We seem already to have solved the problem of defining what is historical and what is not. In the time of Thucydides, as Hornblower makes clear, historiography was still a literary genre *in fieri*, and in the absence of already existing rules, a historian had to set down what he thought were the appropriate boundary lines, so as to clarify the limits within which he considered historiography to have its place. In Book One Thucydides claims that the public will notice the absence of the fabulous from his narrative (τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες, I 22.4). Here the writer is not only engaged in controversy with Herodotus and the predecessors who included μῦθοι in their works, as has been frequently pointed out¹; but he is also laying down his own interpretation, his own boundary lines, in order to clarify what should be part of an historical work and what should not. Clearly he considered μῦθοι not to be a necessary part of it.

In an article now published in one of his *Contributi alla storia degli studi classici* Momigliano analysed the relation between the historians of the classical world and

¹ A.W.Gomme (*HCT* I, 149) notes that τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες might be intended as 'the absence of story-telling element' so common in Herodotus, 'but it has nothing to do with belief or disbelief in the main traditions of what we call the 'mythical' period of Greek history'. S.Hornblower (1991, 61) translates τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες as 'the unromantic character of my narrative'. A.J.Woodman (1988, 23-4) interprets the expression as the 'absence of fabulous', or of the μῦθοι present in Herodotus: "[Thucydides'] statement there guarantees that he is providing his future audience, not with the entertainment which conventionally derived from the mythical or legendary and which they could get from Herodotus, but with τὸ σαφές of two categories of events which are linked by the notion of probability" (p.24). S.Flory (1990, 193-209) argues that Thucydides wants to keep his distance from the patriotic and untrustworthy histories that celebrate the glories of the Persian Wars. F. Hartog (1982, 22-30) notes that because Thucydides points his attention towards the present as the only possible source for writing history, the μῦθοι linked to the past cannot possibly be considered as trustworthy. A fuller discussion on I. 22 will follow later on in this chapter.

their audiences. Tragedy and comedy, as he points out, were literary genres performed within a religious context, while oratory found its place in the court or in the assembly and lyric poetry was referred to a particular addressee or was part of a religious rite. The works of philosophers, sophists and medical authors, although not so much is known about the setting in which they may have been normally performed, had an educational and didactic role. In contrast, ancient historians seemed neither to have a specific function nor to be related to a specific context.

“The peculiarity of the historians is that they neither became a profession, nor had a ceremonial task, nor did they have a clearly defined type of knowledge to discover or to transmit. They arrived late on the market (in the fifth century BC) and were never certain of finding a buyer for their products. There are stories of success (even of prizes) for historians. Some of them ultimately found employment *qua* historians. But these were exceptions. Unlike the poets, philosophers and orators, historians never became a distinct group of entertainers or teachers. They never acquired a recognised place in society. They had continuously to repeat their claim that their histories were either instructive or pleasurable or both, because the word history did not by itself suggest either instruction or pleasure”.²

It is hard to assign Greek historiography of the fifth century BC to a particular category. There are very few examples preserved from the earlier period and the *History of the Persian Wars* written by Herodotus stands out as one of the few extended historical works known to us before Thucydides's time. *The History of the Peloponnesian War* has often been regarded as a fundamental step towards the definition of how a historical work should be.³

Our thesis will try to verify in what degree Thucydides' *oeuvre* may still be viewed as a *work in progress*, how some innovative and illuminating new attitudes come alongside more traditional forms of expression and thought. However, in analysing this tension between tradition and innovation, our study is intended to be more retrospective than forward looking. Attention will be paid in particular to how, in his attempt to give shape to a work of history, Thucydides may have been influenced by other past or contemporary literary genres, and to what extent his work may still reveal detectable signs of different influences. In doing so, we cannot forget that in the fifth century Greek culture was still in great part an oral culture: even when

² Cf. Momigliano (1980, 362-3).

³ Momigliano (1969) notes the essential role played by Thucydides in giving a precise direction to follow for later historians. He convinced most of his successors that, measured by his criteria, Herodotus was not trustworthy, and that only a political or military history should gain approval.

a literary work was originally written down, it was then transmitted to the public through the medium of a performance. In order to study Thucydides' relationship with his cultural background our analysis will therefore have to take into account the oral characteristics of these works and to consider whether any possible influence from this side might also be detectable in his work. Our study will be carried out on two different levels. On the one hand, we will present evidence of influences in content and structure on sections of the *History* from other literary genres. On the other, we will try to work out to what extent the presence of such cross-links may indicate where Thucydides' work stands in relation to the practice of oral delivery. In order to avoid any charge of making general assumptions without evidence, I begin by outlining the cultural context in which Thucydides wrote.

Oral delivery and written texts

In the Greek world the written and the oral word coexisted for a long time after writing made its first appearance. Greek culture was originally pre-literate, so that both the composition and the transmission of literary works were at that time oral. From the fifth till almost the end of the fourth century, the use of writing consolidates while oral transmission is still in use. In this phase oral and written intertwine in what is called the *aural culture*.⁴ While writing is used to compose the text, the work is then transmitted through an oral performance not necessarily followed by written publication. It is from the Alexandrian period onwards that we find literary works like the Callimachean βιβλίον being composed precisely in order to be read as a written text. Throughout the fifth century, the evidence shows that the practice of writing is increasingly popular but not sufficiently to displace the traditional custom of oral delivery. Evidence of the spread of literacy goes hand in hand with information about oral transmission of literary works.

⁴ For the definition of aural culture in Greece see L.E.Rossi (1992, 77-106), M.Fantuzzi (1980, 593ff.), L.Porciani (1994, 377-99).

Widespread literacy in ancient Greece is attested by different sources.⁵ In Athens the democratic form of government must have stimulated the production of written material. Numerous inscriptions were used to publish Athenian decrees and documents.⁶ Because the practice of inscribing something on stone was quite expensive, it may be assumed that these documents were produced for the benefit of a large part of the population. The sentence usually appended to public inscriptions seems to confirm such an idea: σκοπεῖν τῷ βουλομένῳ “For the inspection of whoever wishes [to inspect it]”.⁷

In the Athenian courts the change in favour of writing took many years to consolidate. It is not until 380 BC that written pleadings were required by law. However, Harvey argues against the idea that a written deposition might be considered as a sign of widespread literacy: after all, a person wishing to bring an action against someone might always resort to a *proxenus* in order to carry out this task.⁸ Oral witnesses and written documents must have coexisted in the Athenian courts throughout the fifth century. The situation must have slightly changed by the time of Hippodamus of Miletus (c. 450 BC), who advanced the proposal that jurymen should write down the penalty to be inflicted on the offender.⁹ As Harvey notes, even if such a proposal was not accepted, it seems unlikely that Hippodamus would have made the suggestion unless the majority of the jury were literate. Evidence in favour of literate juries comes also from the Pseudo-Demosthenic speech *Against Macartatus*.¹⁰ The speaker, in order to explain the family relations of a certain

⁵ Different scholars have analysed the diffusion of literacy in the Athenian democracy. See in particular the works of F.D.Harvey (1966, 585-635), R.Thomas (1992), E.G.Turner (1951), W.V.Harris (1989), G.F.Nieddu (1984a, 213-61), G.Cavallo (1989), L.E.Rossi (1992, 77-106), C.O.Pavese (1972), F.Kenyon (1932), H.L. Pinner (1948).

⁶ A selection of Greek historical inscriptions is in M.N.Tod (1946). Examples of the documents preserved are the inscriptions relating Athenian decrees: one early inscription belongs to the late sixth century and reports the Athenian decree related to Salamis (I.G. i².1, Tod 11). Public inscriptions are used to notify the Athenian tribute quota list (vd. I.G. i².191, 30 Tod; I.G.i².196,38 Tod; I.G.i².202, 46 Tod; I.G. i². 220, 71 Tod); refer the alliance of Athens with other cities (I.G.i². 19, 31 Tod; I.G. i².26, 39 Tod; I.G. i².90, 68 Tod; etc.) and the Athenian expeditions (I.G.i².1085, 41 Tod; I.G.i².97,76 Tod; I.G. i².98, 99, 77 Tod). Various documents attest military expenses (I.G.i².293, 50 Tod; I.G. i².295,55 Tod) and building accounts (I.G.i².352, 52 Tod; I.G. i².366, 53 Tod).

⁷ Aeschines I 83. For a discussion of this passage see Harvey (1966, 599-600).

⁸ Cf.F.D.Harvey (1966, 590ff.).

⁹ Cf. Aristotle (*Politics*, II. 5. 1268a). Hippodamus was an architect. Aristotle (*Politics*, II. 5. 1267b f.) notes that he was the first man not engaged in politics, who attempted to speak on the subject of the best form of constitution.

¹⁰ Ps.Demosthenes, *Against Macartatus* 43.18 ff.

τὸ μὲν οὖν πρῶτον διανοήθη, ὡς ἄνδρες δικασταί, γράψας ἐν πίνακι ἅπαντας τοὺς συγγενεῖς τοὺς Ἀγνίου, οὕτως ἐπιδεικνύειν ὑμῖν καθ' ἕκαστον· ἐπειδὴ δ' ἐδόκει οὐκ

Hagnias, says that he thought, at first, of writing them down on a tablet and showing the document to the court. He then changed his mind, thinking that not all the jurors would be able *to see* the text properly. He seems to take it for granted that they would all have been able to read it. However, it is reasonable to suppose -with Harvey- that the jurors represented the well-to-do in Athenian society, and therefore possibly also the best educated.¹¹

Ostracism, which was an institution of the democracy, might also provide some indications of the diffusion of literacy in Athens. It was possible to exile a citizen by securing a sufficient number of votes in the form of an *ostrakon* with the name of that person. However, evidence of this kind is not always easy to interpret. Harvey notes that the 190 *ostraka* found in the acropolis seem to have been inscribed by only fourteen different hands.¹² Moreover, Plutarch tells how a man unable to write asked the person sitting next to him, who happened to be Aristides, to write down for him the name of Aristides on an *ostrakon*.¹³ Harvey argues that this story shows that the practice of ostracism is not necessarily evidence of widespread literacy, but not all scholars share that view.¹⁴

In the Athenian theatre written documents often make their appearance. At the opening of Aristophanes' *Clouds* we find one of the main characters, Strepsiades, worriedly reading off his son's expenses from a wax tablet.¹⁵ Harvey argues this

ἀν εἶναι ἐξ ἴσου ἡ θεωρία ἅπασι τοῖς δικάσταῖς, ἀλλ' οἱ πόρρω καθήμενοι ἀπολείπεσθαι, ἀναγκαῖον ἴσως τῷ λόγῳ διδάσκειν ὑμᾶς· τοῦτο γὰρ ἅπασι κοινόν ἐστιν

"At the first, men of the jury, it was my intention to write on a board all the kinsfolk of Hagnias, and thus to exhibit them to you one by one; but when I saw plainly that not all the jurymen would have an equally good view, but that those sitting at a distance would be at a disadvantage, it is perhaps necessary to instruct you by word of mouth, for thus all will be on the same footing".

¹¹ Cf. F. D. Harvey (1966, 597).

¹² See also O. Broneer (1938, 228-43, esp. 228-32). These *ostraka* are inscribed with the name of Themistocles; Broneer supposes they were prepared for the ostracism of 483 BC and then thrown into the well found in the Akropolis shortly after.

¹³ Plutarch, *Aristides*, 7. 323.5ff.

¹⁴ Cf. W. Harris (1989, 73ff.), who believes that ostracism may be taken as a proof in favour of the idea of a widespread Athenian literacy from 480 BC onward, and E.G. Turner (1951, 1ff.), for whom widespread literacy is a basic assumption for the Athenian democracy.

¹⁵ Aristophanes *Clouds*, vv.18-24

... ἄπτε, παῖ, λύχνον,
κᾶκφερε τὸ γραμματεῖον, ἵν' ἀναγνῶ λαβὼν
ὅποσοις ὀφείλω καὶ λογίσωμαι τοὺς τόκους.
φέρ' ἴδω, τί ὀφείλω; δώδεκα μνᾶς Πασίᾳ.
τοῦ δώδεκα μνᾶς Πασίᾳ; τί ἐχρησάμην;

scene evidences a high degree of literacy among country people, while Harris disagrees and stresses the fact that Strepsiades is not a simple farmer but a landowner who might be supposed to have had a better education.¹⁶ From Aristophanes we get the impression that a certain degree of literacy was expected of anyone aspiring to be a politician. When the Sausage-Seller objects that he can hardly read or write¹⁷, this is surely evidence that literacy was expected of anyone with actual ambitions in that direction. *Knights* also gives us examples of silent reading. A slave reads an oracle and avoids replying to the questions his companion asks about it¹⁸ and in *Frogs* Dionysus silently reads a text of the *Andromeda* of Euripides.¹⁹ Another passage attesting the presence of silent reading is in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides: here Theseus silently reads the wax tablet written by Phaedra before she committed suicide.²⁰

ὅτ' ἐπριάμην τὸν κοππατίαν. Οἶμοι τάλας,
εἶθ' ἐξεκόπην πρότερον τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν λίθῳ.

"Light a lamp, and bring out my accounts, so I may take it and read how many creditors I have and calculate the interest. Now, let me see, what do I owe? "Twelve minas to Pasiās". Twelve minas to Pasiās? What for? Why did I borrow it? Oh yes, when I bought the horse with the *koppa* brand. My god! I wish I'd had my eye knocked out first with a stone". (Translation by A.H. Sommerstein (1982, 13), adapted). The word γραμματεῖον used by Strepsiades is translated by T.Mitchell (1838, 5) as "borrower's memorandum book". K.J.Dover (1968, 95) notes that we cannot be sure about the material used for the γραμματεῖον : "but it was probably a number of wooden tablets with waxed surfaces; [...] a more durable object than a sheet or roll of papyrus, and more economical in that it could be used afresh if all the debts were ever paid off".

¹⁶ Cf. F.D.Harvey (1966, 613), W.Harris (1989, 60ff.).

¹⁷ Aristophanes *Knights*, vv. 188-9 (Sausage-Seller)

ἀλλ' ὦγαθ', οὐδὲ μουσικὴν ἐπίσταμαι
πλὴν γραμμάτων, καὶ ταῦτα μέντοι κακὰ κακῶς.

"But, my good man, I've not even had any education, except for reading and writing, and I'm proper bad at that". (Translation from A.H.Sommerstein (1981, 175)). Referring to μουσική Sommerstein (1981, 153) comments: "that is, the knowledge and the skills the imparting of which formed the mental and cultural component of the Greek liberal education- principally music in our sense and the study of poetry". T.Mitchell (1836, 48) notes that γράμματα is one of the four constituent parts of liberal education according to Aristotle *Polit.* VIII 3 a (γράμματα, γραφική, γυμναστική, μουσική).

¹⁸ Aristoph. *Knights*, vv.118 ff.: The slave who is reading the document, generally identified with the general Demosthenes, is not reading the text aloud. The other servant, probably representing Nikias, keeps asking him for information about what the document says.

¹⁹ Cf. Aristophanes *Frogs* v.52 ff.

²⁰ Euripides *Hippolytus*, v. 877 ff. A tablet is found next to Phaedra's body. Theseus reads it silently and then exclaims:

βοᾷ βοᾷ δέλτος ἄλαστα. Πᾶ φύγω
βάρος κακῶν ; Ἀπὸ γὰρ ὀλόμενος οἴχομαι,
οἶον οἶον εἶδον ἐν γραφαῖς μέλος
φθεγγόμενον τλάμων.

"it shrieketh,-ah, horrors the tablet outshrieketh! How can I flee
my burden of woes! I am utterly ruin-sped!
What incantation of curses is this I have
graved on the wax- woe's me!"

(Text and translation from A.S.Way (1922, 232-3)). W.S.Barrett (1964, 328) notes: " The tablet consisted of two pieces of wood coated on one side with wax (which took the writing) and hinged so as

Other passages in tragedy imply that literacy was highly esteemed. In the *Prometheus Vincit* the use of writing (γραμμαμάτων συνθέσεις) is listed among the blessings granted to mortals by Prometheus.²¹ M.Griffith, in his commentary, notes that writing is here named as μουσομήτηρ (“mother of the muses”), the term replaces the traditional identification of Mnemosyne, Memory, as mother of the Muses: the latter was “natural enough for oral poets” as Griffith points out, “whereas to a fifth century author writing is memory’s source”.²² In one of the fragments of Euripides’ *Palamedes* (N 578) vowels, consonants and syllables are considered as “remedies against forgetfulness” (λήθης φάρμακα). G. Nieddu²³ notes that in the fifth century the metaphor which represents memory as a written record is widely attested. It is found in Pindar (*Olympian* X, 1-3)²⁴, in Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* (v. 179)²⁵ and *Eumenides* (v.273)²⁶ where Hades’ Memory is qualified as δελταγράφος. In Sophocles’ *Triptolemus* (frag. 597 Radt) Demeter advises the hero to keep in mind her words : τοῦ δ’ ἐν φρενὸς δέλτοισι τοὺς ἐμοὺς λόγους. Nieddu argues that the traditional epic formula used to encourage a character to treasure somebody else’s advice: ἄλλο, δὲ τοι ἐρέω, σὺ δ’ ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσι, is

to fold together with the wax on the inside. When folded, the tablet was tied with thread or the like and secured by a wax seal affixed to the thread.” And also: “ Theseus picks up the image of βοῶνι· the tablet’s message is a song, a μέλος and the voice it sings with is the letters on it” (p.332). For a general discussion on the practice of silent reading in antiquity see B.W.Knox (1968, 421-435).

²¹ Aeschylus *Prometheus V.* vv. 459 ff.

καὶ μὴν ἀριθμόν, ἔξοχον σοφισμάτων
ἐξεῦρον αὐτοῖς, γραμμάτων τε συνθέσεις,
μνήμην ἀπάντων, μουσομήτορ’ ἐργάνην

“Aye, and numbers too, chiefest of sciences, I invented for them, and the combining of letters, creative mother of the Muses’ arts, wherewith to hold all things in memory”(Text and translation from H.W.Smyth (1922, 256-7)). D.J.Conacher (1980, 22-3) accepts a late date for the *Prometheus Bound* (458-456/5 BC) and gives an overview of various attempts at dating the play (22-23, note 3). Some doubts have also been raised as regards the authorship of the play. For a critical analysis of these views see M.P.Pattoni (1987, 15-32).

²² Cf. M.Griffith (1983, 169).

²³ Cf. G. Nieddu (1984b, 213-19).

²⁴ Pindar, *Olympian* X 1-3 : τὸν Ὀλυμπιονίκαν ἀνάγνωτέ μοι Ἀρχεστράτου παῖδα, πόθι φρενὸς ἐμᾶς γέγραπται, “Read me the name of the Olympian victor, the son of Arcestratus! Tell me where it is written in my heart!”

²⁵ Aeschylus, *Suppliants* (vv.178-9): καὶ τὰπὶ χέρσου νῦν προμηθίαν λαβὼν αἰνῶ φυλάξαι τᾶμ’ ἐπη δελτουμένα. “ And now, having taken forethought as to what may happen on shore, I advise you to write my words carefully on the tablet of your minds”. (Text and translation from H.F.Johansen (1970, 66-7)).

²⁶ Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, vv.273-75: μέγας γὰρ Αἰδης ἐστὶν εὐθυνοὺς βροτῶν ἐνερθε χθονός, δελτογράφω δὲ πάντ’ ἐπωπᾶ φρενί. “For Hades is a mighty corrector of men beneath the earth, and supervises all things with his recording mind”(Text and translation from A.J.Podlecki (1989, 78-9, see also comment at p.152).

progressively replaced with the image of the “tablet of the soul” (ἐν φρενὸς δέλτοισι), a change that attests the increasing diffusion of a written culture.

It should be noted that all these different sources of evidence come from Athens. Although education was not compulsory by law, living in this city must have offered many opportunities for learning as well as making use of letters. On the other hand, various scholars seem to agree that in Sparta literacy must have been comparatively less developed than in Athens.²⁷ Women in Athens, at any rate, are normally believed to be literate. Vase paintings from the V and IV century represent women in the act of writing or reading and tragic characters like Phaedra in Euripides’ play or Deianira in Sophocles seem to presuppose a certain degree of literacy.²⁸ An old saying seems to confirm that a basic degree of literacy was expected of every member of a civil society: ἂν καὶ τὸ λεγόμενον μήτε γράμματα μήτε νεῖν ἐπίστωνται “even if -as the saying goes- they are not able either to read or to swim”.²⁹ Evidence in favour of literate Athenian audiences is also brought to us by different tragic passages where a character on the stage gives a description of the letters that form a word. Athenaeus (*Deipnosophistae* X. 454a f.) notes that the comic poet Callias is the first to describe a letter in iambic verse, and that Euripides composed a speech in his *Theseus*³⁰ in which an illiterate herdsman describes the letters that form the name of Theseus. Athenaeus adds that Agathon in his *Telephus* and Theodectes of Phaleris did the same.³¹

²⁷ Cf. F.D.Harvey (1966, 623-27, esp. p.627) and W.Harris (1989, 108 ff.).

²⁸ Vase paintings are often a controversial source of evidence. In the case of females shown writing S.G.Cole (1981, 219-45) and Pomeroy (1977, 51-68) argue in favour of their literate competence, while F.D.Harvey (1966, 622) notes that many of these pictures represent Muses or poetesses, although some of the scenes are drawn from everyday life.

²⁹ Plato *Leges*, 689 D and the discussion in F.D.Harvey (1966, 628). Nieddu (1984b, 217-8, note 10) cites another passage from Plato *Lysis* 209 a b as confirmation of the high rate of alphabetisation of the members of wealthy Athenian families at the end of the fifth century. Lysis’ parents rely on this young son “when they want some reading or writing done for them” (ὅταν γὰρ βούλωνται αὐτοῖς τινα ἀναγνώσθῃναι ἢ γραφῇναι).

³⁰ Euripides *Theseus* 382 Nauck : “ Though I am not skilled in letters, yet will I tell the clear witness of their shapes. There is a circle, as it were measured off by compasses; this has in its centre a plain mark. The second letter has first two strokes, and these are kept asunder by another in their middle. The third is like a curl turned hither and thither, while the fourth, again, has one rising stroke, and three cross-lines are propped against it. The fifth is not easy to describe; for there are two lines standing apart, and these run together into one support. The last letter is like the third.” (Translation from Ch. Burton Gulick (1957, 561)).

³¹ Cf. Agathon *Telephus* frag. 4 Nauck and Theodectes of Phaleris frag. 6 Nauck.

This evidence supports the idea that literacy was quite widespread in classical Athens. However, our discussion would not be complete if we did not consider the matter in all its bearings and verify to what extent oral culture was still practised in parallel with the increasing use of writing. Pupils in schools had to learn by heart along with the alphabet the basic literary works and, although cheap material must have been used for practising writing, the use of books seems to have been limited to reference books for teachers. Literary works had to be written on expensive material like papyrus, which was imported from Egypt, and the cost of the final product might have prevented many from being able to afford to buy books.³² As a consequence book-production was limited and book-trading was often directed towards wealthy people. It is not by chance that the little information we have about private libraries in the sixth century concerns important personages like Polycrates and Pisistratus, and in the following century a famous tragedian like Euripides.³³ When a book is published, it is normally the author himself who superintends the process of publication, and the work is often ordered by a client. Evidence for the existence of a professional figure similar to the modern publisher is scanty: G. Nieddu cites as evidence Cratinus

³² On the production and diffusion of books in antiquity see F. Kenyon (1932, 1-37), H.L. Pinner (1948, 46-9), G. Cavallo (1989, I ff.). But see Xenophon (*Anab.* VII 5.14.), who speaks of written books found in Thrace among the materials washed ashore after a shipwreck: ἐνταῦθα εὐρίσκοντο πολλὰ μὲν κλῖναι, πολλὰ δὲ κιβώτια, πολλὰ δὲ βιβλίοι γεγραμμένοι, καὶ τὰλλα πολλὰ ὅσα ἐν ξυλίνοις τεύχεσι ναύκληροὶ ἄγουσιν. "Here there were found great numbers of beds and boxes, quantities of written books, and an abundance of all the other articles that shipowners carry in wooden chests." (Text and translation from O.J. Todd (1922, 321)). Here the context leads us to suppose that books were a common item of trade. We might also compare the beginning of Pindar's V *Nemean Ode* (v. 1 ff.) where the poet affirms that his song will be carried in every ship and every boat sailing from Aigina. Aigina was a busy commercial harbour and it is feasible that the poet alludes here to the great diffusion of his poem (cf. also A. Puech 1952, 64). For a different interpretation see Christ (1896, comment *ad loc.*) and C.A.M. Fennel (1883, 49), who takes the poet to mean that "travellers from Aigina will mention or even recite his ode". Cf. also our discussion later in this chapter on a passage in Aristophanes' *Frogs* v. 1114 ff. where allusion is made to the diffusion of written copies of books in the market.

³³ Cf. Herodotus VII.6 where it is said that a certain Onomacritus set in order the oracles of Musaeus: Ονομάκριτον ἄνδρα Ἀθηναῖον, χρησμολόγον τε καὶ διαθέτην χρησμῶν τῶν Μουσαίου... "Onomacritus, an Athenian oracle monger, one that had set in order the oracles of Musaeus..." This might be considered as an early reference to the job of an editor. From Hdt. (V.90.2) we also learn that Pisistratus possessed a collection of these oracles. How and Wells (1950, v. II, 127) write: "(Onomacritus) is said to have been commissioned by Pisistratus along with three colleagues to collect and arrange the scattered lays of Homer (Cramer, *Anec.* I. 6); if so, he must by now (485 BC) have been quite an old man". As regards Euripides, Aristophanes (*Frogs*, v. 943), attests his passion for books. See also K. Dover (1997, 20). Euripides is mentioned as an early collector of books in Athenaeus (3a), along with Polycrates of Samos, Eucleides, Nicocrates of Cyprus, the kings of Pergamum, Aristotle and Theophrastus among those Greeks who were celebrated for their large libraries (Ath. 3a).

(*Χείρωνες*, 436-31 BC, frag. 249) who mentions the figure of *bibliographos* and Aristomenes (frag. 9 K) who refers to a *bibliopoles*.³⁴

A second factor that might have hindered the circulation of written works was that the practice of oral delivery continued long after the first books made their appearance. Many of the major literary works and whole genres were composed primarily in order to be performed, not silently read. Moreover, the value of the text was directly dependent on the impression that the oral presentation had on a public of listeners rather than on one of readers.³⁵ Such a consideration is of great importance for the understanding of the Greek attitude towards the written word. All the literary genres were traditionally linked to performance and they retained this link long after the introduction and diffusion of books.

At first poetry was the medium for expressing everything worthy of preservation. The Homeric poems were composed in hexameters and performed. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* belong most probably to a stage when composition was no longer purely oral, though the delivery of the text, at any rate, still was. Milman Parry led the way to a new interpretation of these works when he first spoke of them being composed in an oral-formulaic style.³⁶ Many more works and discussions on the subject have followed since. The transmission of the text was entrusted to professional singers, the *rhapsodoi*. These figures used to travel extensively and to recite parts from the Homeric poems, which were especially selected according to the demands and the characteristics of different audiences.³⁷ In time performances from the Homeric

³⁴ Cf. G.F. Nieddu (1984a, 246 ff.), but see also our discussion in the previous note.

³⁵ Cf. the discussion on the importance of ὑπόκρισις in Aristotle *Rhet* III 12.2 ff. where the author distinguishes between the style of written composition (λέξις γραφικὴ) and that of debate (λέξις ἀγωνιστικὴ). See also the article of F. De Martino on the voice of the actors and the contribution of M. Vetta on the voice of the author in F. De Martino- A.H. Sommerstein (1995, 17-59 and 61-78 respectively).

³⁶ The collected essays of M. Parry as published by A. Parry (1971).

³⁷ See A. Lesky (1966, 73): "The (Homeric) text was for a long time in the hands of rhapsodes, who were organised into guilds. [...] The basis of all these recitations must have been a written copy, which we may suppose to have been the valued possession of such a guild". On the likely characteristics of the Homeric performance De Martino (1995, 49) writes: "It is impossible to believe that an epic performance, a performance capable of keeping its public holding their breath and not uttering a sound for a whole night, was little more than a monotonous chant and did not draw on that great natural source of theatrical effects, namely changes from one voice to another – as well as some use of gesture – whether that variation in sound underlined the narrative sequence, that is, the sequence of episodes in the *Iliad*, or the dramatic sequence, that is, the sequence of speeches in direct form, for the latter of which it is not by accident that Homer regularly provided stage-directions on the character's facial

poems were held at public festivals, and a large audience was thus able to hear epic texts.³⁸ Monodic lyric was often performed at symposia where poetic texts were delivered before a restricted audience.³⁹ Choral lyric was addressed to a large audience: the performance being occasioned by a sports competition or a religious festival. Although in many cases a written text was also published and sent to the client who had commissioned it, the everlasting fame of the poem relied more on the effect of the performance, than on the written diffusion of the text.⁴⁰

Tragic and comic texts were diffused almost exclusively through the performance. The process of selecting the texts to be performed during public festivals also seems to imply a live performance by the author in front of the archons.⁴¹ However, the general public learnt to appreciate the text listening to the play performed on the stage during the festivals. We have evidence that popular tragedies were also re-performed in subsequent years.⁴² As for comedy, it is natural

expression and voice". (*"Non e` credibile che una performance epica, in grado di tenere col fiato sospeso e in silenzio il suo pubblico anche per una notte intera, fosse poco più che una monotona cantilena e non facesse invece ricorso a quella naturale grande risorsa spettacolare che e` l'alternanza di voci diverse, oltre che ad una qualche gestualità, sia che questa alternanza sonora asseconasse la successione narrativa, la successione cioè degli episodi iliadici, sia che asseconasse la successione drammatica, ossia la serie di discorsi diretti, per i quali non a caso Omero dava ordinariamente didascalie prosopiche e vocali"*). Cf. also M.Vetta (1995, 73 and n.33).

³⁸ From Plato (*Hipparchus*, 228b), we learn that Pisistratus' son, Hipparchus, compelled the *raphsodoi* to recite the poems of Homer at the Panatheneae and that those used to recite in rely, one man following on another (ἐξ ὑπολήψεως ἐφεξῆς). Similarly Diogenes Laertius (I. 57) speaks of public recitations of Homer that: "shall follow in fixed order: thus the second reciter must begin from the place where the first left off" τὰ τε Ομήρου ἐξ ὑποβολῆς γέγραφε ραψωδεῖσθαι, οἷον ὅπου ὁ πρῶτος ἔλεξεν, ἐκεῖθεν ἄρχεσθαι τὸν ἐχόμενον. (Text and translation from R.D.Hicks (1925, 58-9)). Here, however, Solon is made responsible for the beginning of this practice of recitation. Further references are found in A.J.B.Wace and F.H.Stubbings (1962, 255).

³⁹ For the relationship between monodic lyric and symposia see M. Vetta (1983) and B.Gentili (1984, 3-49). See also M. Vetta (1995, 62) who notes that in the fifth century the lyric genres were all still closely related to singing and declamation. A detailed analysis of different poetical genres in archaic Greece can be found in C.Odo Pavese (1972). See also R.Thomas (1992, 106) for the anonymous character of many of these poems. Speaking of the diffusion of archaic poetry F.Kenyon (1932, 16) writes: "I imagine, therefore, that written copies of poems, though they existed, were rare, and were the property of professional reciters, from whom alone the general public derived their knowledge of them".

⁴⁰ C.O.Pavese (1998, 63-90) considers the Homeric and Hesiodic poems together with the Homeric Hymns as rhapsodic epic poems meant to be orally performed.

⁴¹ Cf. A.Pickard-Cambridge (1968, 84): "The choice of the poets to be allowed to compete at the Dionysia and the Lenaia rested with the relevant archon. To him the poets 'applied for a chorus' (χορὸν αἰτεῖν); on what principles or evidence he made his choice and assigned the chorus (χορὸν διδόναι) we are never told; but Cratylus (*Βουκόλοι* fr. 15 K) (who had himself been refused a comic chorus) attacks an archon for preferring the dissolute poet Gnesippus to Sophocles. A passage of Plato's *Laws* VII 817 D suggests that each poet read specimens of his work to the archon". Cf. also R.Osborne (1993, 21-38).

⁴² On the posthumous performances of Aeschylus see D.Del Corno (1956, 277-91) and R.Cantarella (1970, 227-55).

to infer that most of the success of the text relied especially on the mimetic ability of the interpreter in giving a comic twist to particular situations and characters. It is true that some evidence seems to suggest that written copies of tragic texts were sold in the market⁴³, but it is reasonable to suppose with Turner that the Greeks' familiarity with dramatic poetry came from their custom of listening to the plays performed on the stage more than from reading these texts.⁴⁴ Arnott says that both comedy and tragedy are considered as oral genres not only because they were performed, but also because the performance presupposed an interaction between audience and actors playing on the stage.⁴⁵

From this brief survey we might infer that oral delivery was the medium employed to communicate verse works, poetry as well as theatrical texts. What about prose works? Oratory was by definition orally performed either in the assembly or in the court. In a study on the structure of judiciary Greek eloquence, M. Lavency directed his attention to the speeches written by the logographers and noted that these orations usually employed regular syntactical structures and formulae.⁴⁶ This form, he argued, helped the client to memorise the speech and improved the quality of the performance. According to Lavency oral delivery must actually have increased the intelligibility of many passages that would have been hard to follow in a written text. Plutarch reports that one of Lysias' customers was not satisfied with the quality of the speech: he claimed that when one read it more than once, it seemed to lose its effectiveness.⁴⁷ Lysias' rejoinder was that nobody was expected to recite the same speech twice in

⁴³ In Aristophanes' *Frogs* Dionysus says that everyone in the audience has a copy of the text and is able to follow the performance (Aristophanes *Frogs*, v.1114: βιβλίον τ' ἔχων ἕκαστος μανθάνει τὰ δεξιὰ). W.B.Stanford (1958,168) advances three possible interpretations: a) the βιβλίον is a copy of the first edition of *Frogs*; b) it is some current manual of military tactics; c) "his book" is a gibe at a growing bookishness of the Athenian public in the late fifth century. Stanford favours the third hypothesis and translates "each one had his text book". Harris (1989, 86 ff.) argues that this reference to books in Aristophanes is only a comic exaggeration and that the line cannot be considered as evidence for the diffusion of books. Harvey (1966, 602) advances the idea that this sentence only appeared in one of the published copies of the text. A more interesting interpretation has been proposed by E. A. Havelock (1982, 284), who points out that in *Frogs* the issue of oral reception of drama is raised at several points. At v. 866 Aeschylus alludes to the re-performance of his plays after his death and at v. 797 ff. it is the weight of the verses composed by Aeschylus and Euripides to be put on a scale and not that of books. Havelock concludes that: "the Greek poetry referred to in this way comes through as though it were a performance rather than a body of literature" (p.282).

⁴⁴ Cf. E.G.Turner (1951, 22).

⁴⁵ Cf. P.D.Arnott (1989, 1-43).

⁴⁶ Cf. M.Lavency (1958, 225-234).

⁴⁷ Plutarch, *De Garrulitate*, 5.504.

front of a jury. Because a speech was composed in order to win the favour of jurors, the value of the text was judged by how favourably they responded to it. How effective the text seemed when it were silently read as a written document was apparently not a primary matter of concern. Moreover, it was important that the speech sounded like something generated at the moment of delivery, even if it had been composed in advance.⁴⁸ R. Thomas explains that if the speech had given the impression of being carefully written down, the listeners would have been afraid of being deceived by the speaker.⁴⁹ Written publication of the speech seems to have followed oral delivery. J. Worthington supposes that the performance was considered to determine the effectiveness of the text.⁵⁰ Only after being polished and modified so as to eliminate the deficiencies revealed at the time of delivery, would the oration have been committed to written publication.

Philosophical and medical treatises make their appearance at the end of the VI century. Anaximander is said to have been the first to collect and publish his thoughts around 547 BC.⁵¹ As Havelock points out, the style of Heraclitus is also an oral style: “(Heraclitus) never refers to readers or books; his world is that of the listening audience”.⁵² In Fg. D-K 22 B Heraclitus speaks of his own *logos* as being listened to by his contemporaries. Empedocles wrote in verse, as did Xenophanes who, although critical of the work of Homer and Hesiod, employs like them many devices proper to oral delivery. Parmenides speaks of himself as itinerant. His work is composed in the Homeric style, and, like the *rhapsodoi* he must have travelled and presented his thought to different audiences in different parts of Greece.

“We conclude that Parmenides, like his two predecessors, composed within the context of an oral culture: that the world view of that culture was still furnished by Homer and Hesiod; that the philosopher’s task was of necessity to revise this world view and the language in which it was expressed; and yet that at the same time he can

⁴⁸ Poets often resort to similar devices. Compare the epinicia of Pindar, which were written and thought to closely, but sometimes contain elements meant to reflect the excitement of improvisation: e.g. *Olympian* 9.35 where the poet suddenly rejects and abandons one topic and moves to a new one. A further touch of improvisation is in *Pythian* 11. 57 ff. where the poet pretends to have been carried off his intended course.

⁴⁹ R. Thomas (1992, 124) notes that a sign of the prejudice shown against written speeches is given by the fact that some of the orations published by Demosthenes are said “to smell of the lamp wick”. We might relate this idea with a general prejudice against the written text, a motif that we will consider later on in the course of our exposition.

⁵⁰ Cf. I. Worthington (1991, 64).

⁵¹ Cf. G.F. Nieddu (1984a, 217-8).

⁵² E. Havelock (1982, 243).

argue for change only within a frame of reference supplied by his traditional prototypes.”⁵³

Nevertheless, the more widespread literacy of the fifth century did not usher in the sort of changes we might have expected in the way in which philosophy was communicated. One of the main representatives of Greek philosophical thought in this century, Socrates, did not leave any written work and his technique of teaching focuses on oral discussion. Some impression of these discussions has reached us through the works of Plato and Xenophon, which recreate the kind of dialectic approach developed between Socrates and his disciples. Plato himself exemplifies the strong interrelationship that the world of writing and orality still had in his own time. It is still through discussion and not through reading that knowledge may be achieved and transmitted. In *Phaedrus* Socrates expresses his distrust of getting knowledge out of books.⁵⁴ It is through the dialectic method of enquiry that it is possible to learn, while the wise man would use writing: “to treasure up reminders for himself, when he comes to the forgetfulness of older age, and for others who follow the same path”.⁵⁵ Even when philosophical books are spoken of as being read, our evidence speaks in favour of public readings before a limited audience. In *Phaedo* it is said that Socrates listened to a man reading from a βιβλίον of Anaxagoras and enjoyed the work so much that he decided to buy his own copy of the book.⁵⁶ However, after having bought and carefully read the work by himself, he came to be disappointed: the book was not as good as he expected. It appears that although it was possible to buy written copies of philosophical works at that time, the author still relied on performance to attract his public. It is possible that a good oral presentation would have helped to improve the understanding of difficult thoughts or a man of sufficient histrionic ability might have been able to disguise the lack of original ideas through his manner of presentation.⁵⁷ The latter might explain why Socrates’ first enthusiasm at the time of the oral presentation of Anaxagoras’ work was then succeeded by utter dissatisfaction with the written text.⁵⁸ It is possible that on some occasions the author

⁵³ E.Havelock (1982, 256).

⁵⁴ Plato *Phaedrus*, 274 d- 276 e.

⁵⁵ Plato *Phaedrus*, 276 d.

⁵⁶ Plato, *Phaedo*, 97 b c.

⁵⁷ On the important role played by the actor in order to secure the success of the performance see M.Vetta (1995, 61-78).

⁵⁸ Plato, *Phaedo*, 98 C.

used the performance in order to assess how a public would have reacted to the work, before submitting it for publication. From the *Parmenides* we know that Zeno gave some public lectures from one of his works without intending to publish it in that form.⁵⁹ He was therefore very upset at the news that copies of the text, based on a written script stolen from him, were already on the market without his own approval.

The medical works collected in the Hippocratic Corpus represent a further example of prose written texts. Because writing is used for reporting information, the content is very often quite technical and the style not elaborate. The subject matter and structure do not seem therefore to call for oral performance. However, it has been suggested that the very few works in the corpus in which attempts at a more artistic composition are detectable, were most probably intended to be delivered before an audience in public readings.⁶⁰

These observations suggest a persisting predominance of the spoken over the written word during the fifth century. At a stage when books were produced and a reasonable percentage of the population must have been able to read and write, knowledge was still obtained through listening more than through private reading. When reading does occur, most often it is a public reading from the text in front of a small audience rather than a silent reading in private. As Stanford points out, the Greek language is basically focused on sound effect: the words are chosen with a view to the sound effect they produce when read aloud more than to their graphic characteristics.⁶¹ Through their familiarity with the spoken word Greek audiences should also be imagined as quick to notice and appraise nuances in speech-sound. It is not to be denied that silent reading might occasionally have occurred. We have seen that both tragedy and comedy present on the stage characters silently reading from a written text. The point is that reading aloud rather than silently should be considered as the normal approach to the text for a Greek speaker. Private reading

ἀπὸ δὴ θαυμαστῆς ἐλπίδος, ὦ ἑταῖρε, ὡχόμην φερόμενος, ἐπειδὴ προΐων καὶ ἀναγινώσκων ὁρῶ ἄνδρα τῷ μὲν νῶ οὐδὲν χρώμενον

“My glorious hope, my friend, was quickly snatched away from me. As I went on with my reading I saw that the man made no use of intelligence”. (Text and translation from H.N.Fowler (1923, 338-9)).

⁵⁹ Plato *Parmenides* 127 C and 128 E.

⁶⁰ Cf. B.A. Van Groningen (1958, 254) on the style of the *De Arte* and *De Flatibus*. For the hypothesis that these works were composed for oral presentation see J. Jouanna (1984, 26-44) and R. Thomas (1993, 225-44). On Hippocratic writing in general J. Longrigg (1993). Moreover, Hippocrates (*Praecepta*, XII) speaks of doctors who resort to an ἀκρόασις.

⁶¹ W.B. Stanford (1967, 1-26).

presupposed the availability of books, moreover, as we saw, most of the literary genres were linked to the performance. Even the text of the *Andromeda*, which Dionysus is reading on a boat in *Frogs*, must have been originally known through a public performance in the theatre and we know that the oracles that the character usually identified as the general Demosthenes reads in *Knights* belong to one of the most ancient categories of material to be orally transmitted.⁶² When an author did aim at written publication, public reading must have been used at first to test and to promote the product and to make it known to potential purchasers. Socrates was probably not the only member of the audience who rushed off to buy a copy of Anaxagoras' book after hearing the public reading. It is noteworthy that a recent study of the diffusion of written texts in ancient Greece that favours the idea of a widespread circulation of books, concludes with these words:

"What has been said is not intended to suggest any idea that writing was the only way culture was transmitted. There is no doubt, in fact, that reading in front of an audience (which became a more and more qualified one in the process of time) was still (in general throughout antiquity, even in the more literate periods) the primary mode of publication. This was in fact the way of presenting the text in the environments viewed as most suitable, where the work could have obtained an immediate effect".⁶³

Reading aloud is not an exclusive peculiarity of ancient Greek society. In the Christian era, when book production and trade is widely attested, private reading still implied reading a text aloud. Saint Augustine (AD 354-430) in his *Confessions* says that he was astonished to find that Ambrose read a book "only with his eyes".⁶⁴

Finally, we should consider another element, which might have had its role in slowing down the diffusion of written works. Traditional oral societies seem to share a common prejudice against writing. The written document is often looked upon with suspicion and when issues of interest for the whole community require to be reported, an oral report is normally preferred. The ἄγγελος, the man who is responsible for giving an oral report of important notices to the community, will continue to have an

⁶² L.E.Rossi (1981, 203 and ff.) believes that the oracular responses are a clear example of a genre involving improvisation.

⁶³ G.F.Nieddu (1984a, 250): "*Quanto detto non vuole certo suggerire una visione della circolazione della cultura attuata esclusivamente attraverso la parola scritta. Non vi è dubbio infatti che la lettura davanti ad un uditorio (che tende ad essere sempre più qualificato) continui ad essere (in definitiva per tutta l'antichità, anche per età più letterate) la forma primaria di pubblicazione dell'opera. Essa ne costituiva di fatto la presentazione negli ambienti ritenuti più idonei, nei quali potesse avere un'immediata risonanza.*"

⁶⁴ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 6.3.

important function long after written documents and inscriptions are introduced.⁶⁵ This prejudice against the written document seems to be associated with the idea that a written text, because it is not a product of improvisation but has been carefully prepared in advance, might be cunningly arranged to mislead the addressee. We have already seen that the public's dislike of written speeches by orators presupposes this kind of attitude. Longo has pointed out that the letters in Herodotus and Thucydides, often contain a message of a negative nature.⁶⁶ Only the addressee can open and read them and they often contain instruction to kill somebody, even the bearer in some cases, or a call to rebel or commit treason. Longo argues that written texts were originally used to convey secret or negative matters that could not be openly communicated. This created distrust towards written material that only time and the progressive use of writing for different purposes would overcome.⁶⁷

Oral Delivery and Written Historiography

After this rapid review on the diffusion of writing and oral performance in classical Greece, we now reach the point of considering what the relation between historiography and writing was before Thucydides. The first examples of historical work come from Asia Minor. Different authors wrote prose works of different kinds using the Ionic dialect.⁶⁸ They composed *logoi* on different subjects; and in these works mythology and historical facts were often intertwined. Hecateus of Miletus wrote *Genealogiae* and a *Periegesis*.⁶⁹ The latter might be described as a handbook

⁶⁵ For a discussion on the important role of the ἄγγελος long after writing made its appearance in Greece see O.Longo (1978b, 63-92, esp. p. 73).

⁶⁶ O.Longo (1978a, 527 ff.) where reference is made to the σήματα λυγρὰ in *Iliad* VI. 157 ff. and Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (vv. 46-48 and 156-60). For the negative character of the letters reported in the Pausanias' excursus in Thucydides' Book One see O. Longo (1978a, 526) and my discussion in Chapter One.

⁶⁷ Another possible example of negative use of writing is Herodotus' mention of the use of inscriptions for purposes of propaganda and the fomenting of distrust by Themistocles in order to dissuade the Ionians from fighting against Greece (Hdt. VIII 22).

⁶⁸ On the early Greek historians see R.Drews (1973) and L.Pearson (1939).

⁶⁹ A fragment from the *Genealogiae* preserved by Athenaeus (II 35 AB) in *FGrHist.* 1 F 15, narrates the mythical episode linked to the discovery of the vine in Aetolia. In another fragment (*FGrHist.* 1 F 27 and 27b) he refers to the story of the terrible serpent who was bred at Tainaron and called the Hound of Hades and how Heracles took this serpent to Eurystheus. According to G.Howie (1983) these fragments represent an example of myth revision: Hecataeus was claiming that the name *Hound of*

of geography and ethnography, in which the author reported events that he had seen or heard in the course of his various travels in Asia Minor, Egypt and Asia. Hellanicus of Lesbos seems to have written 28 books, including a history of Persia, the *Persika*.⁷⁰ The Persian Wars also figure among the topics covered by another early historian, Charon of Lampsacus.⁷¹ The date of these works of Hellanicus and Charon is disputed, Drews argues that both should be imagined as written before the publication of Herodotus' work.⁷² Xanthus of Lydia wrote the *Lydiaca* on the history of the Lydians and apparently included some information on mythical and topographical traditions.⁷³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*De Thuc.* 5) considers Xanthus a contemporary of Thucydides. The style of these prose works, from what we are able to see in the few fragments preserved, was very much unadorned and the influence of poets was evident in the choice of subjects and arrangement.⁷⁴ Jacoby

Hades had originally been intended metaphorically by a *proportionate metaphor*, to use Aristotle's term in *Poetics*. The hound is the associate of man as the deadly snake is the associate of the death god, so that the snake can be called metaphorically *Hound of Hades*. In Fr. 27b, we have part of Hecataeus' text, from which it emerges that he also treated the story as an example of exaggeration so that he there also uses the language of reductive rationalisation. An example of myth revision is also found by G. Howie (1983) in *FGrHist* 1 F 26 (Geryon). Geographical descriptions were often expounded: Cf. *FGrHist* 1 F 217 where the setting of the river Odysses is explained. A *Genealogiae* has been also written by Acusilaus of Argos. In *FGrHist*. 2 F1 Acusilaus recounts the myth of the birth of the river Achelous from the marriage of Oceanus and Tethys.

⁷⁰ Some fragments from the *Aegyptica* have been preserved. Cf. the description of the ever-growing wreaths of Egypt in *FGrHist* 4 F 53,54.

⁷¹ Unfortunately not much of Charon's work has come down to us. One fragment quoted by Athenaeus (*FGrHist*.262 F 1) recounts how the Bisaltae defeated the Cardians through the cunning of Naris who had heard of an oracle known to the Cardians and in an amusing stratagem exploited his knowledge of their practice of making their horses dance to the flute on their hind legs and had flautists play the right tunes to make them do it during the battle. Compare the episode of the camels in Hdt. 1.80f. In *FGrHist*.262 F 9, Charon talks about the flight of Pactyas from Mytilene to Chios, a figure we also find in Herodotus' *Histories* (I. 157-70). This parallel is also noted by Plutarch (*De Her. Mal.* 20. 859).

⁷² Cf. R. Drews (1973, 24 and 31). Among other authors see also Pherecydes of Athens (cf. *FGrHist*. 3 F 2, *FGrHist*. 3 F 18 and 3 F 105) and Hippias of Elis (*FGrHist* 6 F 4).

⁷³ See *FGrHist*. 765 F 12 describing a great drought that occurred under the reign of Artaxerxes which caused rivers and lakes in Armenia, Matiene and Lower Phrygia to dry up. The mythical migration of the Phrygians from Europe into Asia after the Trojan War is mentioned in *FGrHist* 765 F 14, and in *FGrHist* 765 F 15 the origin of the name of the Mysians is explained.

⁷⁴ Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*On Thuc.* c. 5) mentions in passing many of the Greek historians who preceded Herodotus and as regards their subject matter and style writes:

οἱ μὲν τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς ἀναγράφοντες ἱστορίας, οἱ δὲ τὰς βαρβαρικὰς, [καὶ] αὐτὰς τε ταύτας οὐ συνάπτοντες ἀλλήλαις, ἀλλὰ κατ' ἔθνη καὶ κατὰ πόλεις διαιροῦντες καὶ χωρὶς ἀλλήλων ἐκφέροντες, ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν φυλάττοντες σκοπόν, ὅσαι διεσφῶζοντο παρὰ τοῖς ἐπιχωρίοις μνήμαι κατὰ ἔθνη τε καὶ κατὰ πόλεις, εἴ τ' ἐν ἱεροῖς εἴ τ' ἐν βεβήλοις ἀποκείμεναι γραφαί, ταύτας εἰς τὴν κοινὴν ἀπάντων γνῶσιν ἐξενεγκεῖν, οἷας παρέλαβον, μήτε προστιθέντες αὐταῖς τι μήτε ἀφαιροῦντες· ἐν αἷς καὶ μῦθοι τινες ἐνήσαν ἀπὸ τοῦ πολλοῦ πεπιστευμένοι χρόνου καὶ θεατρικαί τινες περιπέτειαί πολὺ τὸ ἡλίθιον ἔχειν τοῖς νῦν δοκοῦσαι· λέξιν τε ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ τὴν αὐτὴν ἅπαντες ἐπιτηδεύσαντες, ὅσοι τοὺς αὐτοὺς προείλοντο τῶν διαλέκτων χαρακτῆρας, τὴν σαφῇ

believed that the *logographoi* were itinerant performers who, like the Homeric bard, used to travel and narrate their tales to different audiences. Although such a hypothesis has not found unanimous agreement, the prevailing oral culture of that time supports Jacoby's idea.⁷⁵ Moreover, evidence in favour of possible readings from these historians comes from Plato. In the *Hippias Major* (285 d) it is said that the Spartans enjoyed hearing about: "the genealogies of heroes and men, the foundations of cities in ancient times and in short, about antiquity in general".⁷⁶

In the fifth century oral delivery of historical works is attested for Herodotus. Plutarch says that according to the early third century BC historian Diyllos an award of ten talents was made to Herodotus by the Athenians.⁷⁷ Eusebius also mentions this award and adds that it was conferred as a result of a public reading from his work.⁷⁸ Lucian reports a recitation at Olympia, which was such a success that the nine books were forthwith given the names of the nine Muses.⁷⁹ In the *Suda* it is also said that

καὶ κοινὴν καὶ καθαρὰν καὶ σύντομον καὶ τοῖς πράγμασι προσφυῇ καὶ μηδεμίαν σκευωρίαν ἐπιφαίνουσιν τεχνικὴν ἐπιτρέχει μέντοι τις ὥρα τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτῶν καὶ χάρις, τοῖς μὲν πλείων, τοῖς δ' ἐλάττων, δι' ἣν ἔτι μένουσιν αὐτῶν αἱ γραφαί.

"Some wrote Greek history, others that of foreign lands, without any connection but divided up by single tribes and cities and published separately. They all had the same aim: to make generally known the traditions of the past as they found them preserved in local monuments and religious and secular records in the various tribal and urban centres, without adding to or subtracting from them. These accounts contained some stories which had been believed from remote antiquity, and many dramatic tales of changing fortunes which men of today would think quite silly. Those who wrote in the same dialect also tended to employ the same sort of diction- clear, ordinary, pure, concise, suited to the events and exhibiting no artificial trappings. And yet their writings are tinged with a certain freshness and charm, some more than others, and this has ensured their survival". (Text and Translation from S.Usher (1974)). As regards Hecataeus of Miletus Demetrius (*On Style*, c. 12) characterises his writing as an example of "disjointed" style (διηρημένη ἑρμηνεία) : "inasmuch as the members into which it is divided are not closely united". Demetrius contrasts this style to the "compact style"

(κατεστραμμένη ἑρμηνεία) used by later writers and considered far superior. Earlier historians did, however, use some particular stylistic effects. Longinus (*On Subl.* 27) observes that Hecataeus, like Homer, creates a sudden burst of emotion by initially reporting a speech in indirect form and then suddenly without any warning breaking into direct speech with the character's own words.

⁷⁵ Cf.L.Pearson (1939, 6 ff.).

⁷⁶ Plato *Hipp.Ma.* 285 d: περὶ τῶν γενῶν [...] τῶν τε ἡρώων καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ τῶν κατοικίσεων, ὡς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἐκτίσθησαν αἱ πόλεις, καὶ συλλήβδην πάσης τῆς ἀρχαιολογίας ἡδιστα, ἀκροῶνται...(Text and translation from Fowler (1953, 352-3)). Note that Hippias adds that the Spartans are so fond of these stories that for their sake, in order to gain applause, he is obliged to "learn all that sort of thing by heart and practise it thoroughly" ὥστ' ἔγωγε, δι' αὐτοὺς ἠνάγκασμαι ἐκμεμαθηκέναι τε καὶ ἐκμεμελετηκέναι πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα. This implies not a reading aloud but a performance carried out without relying on a written text.

⁷⁷ Plutarch, *De Malignitate Herodoti*, 26 and FGrHist. 73 F 3.

⁷⁸ Eusebius, *Chronicle*, at the entry for 445-444 BC.

⁷⁹ Lucian, *Herodotus or Action I*.

Thucydides as a child heard Herodotus reading the *Histories* at Olympia and was so moved that he burst into tears.⁸⁰

Indirect support for the reports that the *Histories* were orally delivered comes from analysis of the style of Herodotus.⁸¹ Oral delivery requires a particular arrangement of the text, as it has been shown in various studies. Van Groningen and S.Trenker⁸² have shown how different tales are linked together through the use of juxtapositions, connecting links, intercalation and repetitions of words or sentences. Single units are marked by the introductory exordium, not necessarily followed by an epilogus. The great use of parataxis and *kai style* is said by S.Trenker to be: “*un style typique et très usuel du récit oral*”.⁸³ These characteristics are found not only in Homeric epic and poetry, but also in the first examples of Greek prose, including Hippocratic writings and the earlier philosophic treatises. The *Histories* of Herodotus share many of these stylistic features. Although Herodotus must at any rate ultimately have committed his account of the Persian War to writing, it is possible that oral structures were used in order to facilitate the performance of the text. We shall devote more space later on in this work in order to highlight the presence of such oral features in Herodotus’ work. For the moment I confine myself to citing the view of Hartog, that the *Histories* of Herodotus contain all the indicators that, in view of the composition procedures of archaic literature, lead us to conclude that a listener rather than a reader is being addressed.⁸⁴ Woodman goes even farther and notes that Herodotus often echoes the rhythm of poetry and some of the passages from his work could be turned into verse.⁸⁵

Evidence for the oral delivery of historical works does not end with Herodotus. Momigliano pointed out that good and reliable information about public reading from works of history is still available to us throughout the Hellenistic and Roman period.⁸⁶ He notes that in the second century BC the historian Mnesiptolemus

⁸⁰ *Suda* s.v. “Thucydides”.

⁸¹ Among the studies published on Herodotus’ style see H.Wood (1972), T.S.Brown (1954, 829-843), R.Lattimore (1958, 539f.), H.R.Immerwahr (1966).

⁸² B.A.Van Groningen (1958) and S.Trenker (1960).

⁸³ S.Trenker (1960, 5). Although the style of the early Ionian historians cannot be judged by the few fragments preserved similar uses of paratactic constructions are often detectable. Cf. Hecataeus *FGrHist* 1 F 15 and Hellanicus 4 F 54 for the use of καὶ style. Acusilaus *FGrHist* 2 F 1, Hippias of Elis 6 F 4 show the use of asyndeton.

⁸⁴ Cf. F. Hartog (1988, 275).

⁸⁵ Cf. A.J.Woodman (1988, 3).

⁸⁶ A.Momigliano (1980, 364).

used to read his work to Anthiocus III, king of Syria.⁸⁷ Aristotheus of Troezen read his pro-Roman work at Delphi over several days in succession and the work was so favourably accepted that the author was awarded honours.⁸⁸

In Roman times the practice of *recitationes* was initiated by Asinius Pollio⁸⁹ and flourished under Augustus. Pliny in one of his letters to Celer, has left us a testimony and in the course of a vivid defence of his own practice, he attests the widespread use of *recitationes* from works of history:

Quo magis miror, quod scribis fuisse quosdam qui reprehenderent quod orationes omnino recitarem; nisi vero has solas non putant emendandas. A quibus libenter requisierim, cur concedant (si concedant tamen) historiam debere recitari, quae non ostentationi sed fidei veritatisque componitur; cur tragoediam, quae non auditorium sed scaenam et actores; cur lyrica, quae non lectorem sed chorum et lyram poscunt. At horum recitatio usu iam recepta est.

“So I am all the more surprised to read in your letter that there were people who criticised me for giving any reading of my speeches at all: unless they think that this is the only kind of writing which never needs correction. I should like to ask them why they allow (if they do allow) readings of history, whose authors aim at truth and accuracy rather than at displaying their talents, and tragedy, which needs a stage and actors rather than a lecture-room, and lyric poetry, which calls for a chorus and a lyre instead of a reader. They say that such readings are an established custom.”⁹⁰

Readings from works of history seem still to be very popular. Momigliano notes that: “While the emperor Claudius was alive, his books in Greek on Etruscan and Carthaginian history were read at stated dates in the two Museums of Alexandria: some compensation for a man whose own performances had been such a fiasco”.⁹¹

What is the place of Thucydides in the context of the practice of historiography in his own time? Looking at the evidence offered up to this point, one would naturally

⁸⁷ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 10.432.B

⁸⁸ Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 3 ed. 702.

⁸⁹ Sen. *Controv.* 4 praef. 2.

⁹⁰ Pliny, Ep. VII XVII, esp. par. 7. Later in the same letter Pliny explains the method he uses: *Ac primum quae scripsi mecum ipse pertracto; deinde duobus aut tribus lego; mox aliis trado adnotanda, notasque eorum, si dubito, cum uno rursus aut altero pensito; novissime pluribus recito, ac si quid mihi credis tunc acerrime emendo...* “First of all, I go through my work myself; next, I read it to two or three friends and send it to others for comment. If I have any doubts about their criticisms, I go over them again with one or two people, and finally I read the work to a larger audience; and that is the moment, believe me, when I make my severest corrections, for my anxiety make me concentrate all the more carefully” (Text and translation are from B. Radice (1969, 516-19)).

⁹¹ Cf. A. Momigliano (1980, 365).

suppose that parts of the *History of the Peloponnesian War* could also be read aloud in front of a selected audience. The considerable size of the work makes difficult to think that the whole *oeuvre* could have been published and distributed as a unit and it seems more reasonable to suppose written and separate publications of excerpts perhaps following public lectures before a selected audience. Against this supposition, however, there remains the opinion of ancient critics of Thucydides together with a passage in the *History* itself, which has been the subject of endless dispute among Thucydidean scholars. Dionysius of Halicarnassus citing a passage in Thucydides' introduction (I.1) as example of austere composition comments:

Αὕτη ἡ λέξις ὅτι μὲν οὐκ ἔχει λείας οὐδὲ συνεξεσμένας ἀκριβῶς τὰς ἀρμονίας οὐδ' ἔστιν εὐεπὴς καὶ μαλακὴ καὶ λεληθότως ὀλισθάνουσα διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς ἀλλὰ πολὺ τὸ ἀντίτυπον καὶ τραχὺ καὶ στρυφνὸν ἐμφαίνει, καὶ ὅτι πανηγυρικῆς μὲν ἢ θεατρικῆς οὐδὲ κατὰ μικρὸν ἐφάπτεται χάριτος, ἀρχαϊκὸν δέ τι καὶ αὐθαδὲς ἐπιδείκνυται κάλλος, ὥς πρὸς εἰδότας ὁμοίως τοὺς εὐπαιδεύτους ἅπαντας οὐδὲν δέομαι λέγειν, ἄλλως τε καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦτο γε τοῦ συγγραφέως ὁμολογήσαντος, ὅτι εἰς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἦττον ἐπιτερπὴς ἢ γραφὴ ἔστι, “κτῆμα δ' εἰσαεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα εἰς τὸ παραντিকা ἀκούειν σύγκειται”.

“There is no need for me to say, when all educated people know it as well as I that this passage is not smooth or nicely finished in its verbal arrangement, and is not euphonious and soft, and does not glide imperceptibly through the ear, but shows many features that are discordant and rough and harsh; that it does not make the slightest approach to attaining the grace appropriate to an oration delivered at a public festival or to a speech on the stage, but is marked by a sort of antique and self-willed beauty. Indeed the historian himself admits that his narrative is but little calculated to give pleasure when heard: “ it has been composed as a possession for all time rather than as an essay to be recited at some particular competition”⁹².

Yet the fact that Dionysius views the style of Thucydides as austere does not imply that the history was not suitable for performance. After all, the preceding example of austere style cited by Dionysius is a dithyramb of Pindar ⁹³, which was clearly intended to be performed before an audience.

⁹² Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On literary Composition*, XXII 4ff. (Text and translation from R. Roberts (1910)).

⁹³ Pindar Fgr. 75 Snell-Maehler. J. Sandys (1946, 552-3) writes: “ This dithyramb - which was sung in the central part of Athens , was probably composed for the Great Dionysia celebrated at the beginning of the spring. The festival included dithyrambic contests between choruses of fifty members each”.

The discussed passage of Thucydides at I 22 reads:

Καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἴσως τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται· ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὖθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἔξει. Κτήμᾳ τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρήμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται.

“And it might well be that the absence of fabulous from my narrative will seem less pleasing to the ear; but whoever shall wish to have a clear view both of the events which have happened and of those which will some day, in all human probability, happen again in the same or a similar way- for these to adjudge my history profitable will be enough for me. And, indeed, it has been composed, not as a prize-essay to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time.”⁹⁴

According to many scholars these words are evidence that Thucydides wishes to distance himself from his predecessors, and his work is not intended to excite instant pleasure but is a κτήμα εἰς αἰεὶ, a possession forever.⁹⁵ Gentili, Cerri and Immerwahr⁹⁶ interpret κτήμα as a material element, a book that passes without alterations from one generation to the next one. Although it seems reasonable to infer from the passage an opposition between oral and written culture, Thucydides does not expressly declare that his work was not intended for public readings. I agree with L.Canfora⁹⁷, who points out that Thucydides mentions *akroasis* precisely because he knows that, quite apart from his intention to entrust his work to written publication and transmission, it is through public readings that a text normally reaches its public in the first instance. It also seems possible to suppose that the historian here excuses himself in advance for possible failures that a recital from the *History* might have experienced in the past or that might happen in the future.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Throughout this work text and translation from Thucydides' *History*, unless otherwise stated, are from the *Loeb* edition with an English translation by Ch. Forster-Smith (1919-1923) in four volumes, reprinted.

⁹⁵ Many studies have been published on this subject: see in particular St.Flory (1990, 193-209), E.Badian (1992, 187-90), R.Nicolai (1995, 5-27).

⁹⁶ Cf. B.Gentili and G.Cerri (1975, note at p.25), H.R.Immerwahr (1960, 277ff.).

⁹⁷ L.Canfora (1971, 657). Canfora has also published many other works on Thucydides, see also L.Canfora (1970, 121-35) and (1982, 77-84) in which other aspects related to the composition of the work are studied.

⁹⁸ Cf. Also S.Hornblower (1991, 60) who in a comment of Thuc. I 22 writes: “This sentence does not actually exclude the possibility that Thucydides' own work will be recited; it merely says that some might find such a recitation a joyless occasion”. Hornblower interprets κτήμα εἰς αἰεὶ as “everlasting possession”, “having permanent value”.

Viewed against the cultural background we have outlined in these pages, the idea that Thucydides might have patiently composed eight books of history and waited for them to be published in its final form in order to be diffused as written copies, seems hard to believe, to say the least. Literary works intended for performance did include historical works, both before and after Thucydides' time. Thucydides' work undoubtedly represents an innovative approach to history, but we should also not forget that any innovative attitude must be considered against the cultural setting in which it is generated. A scholarly historian, such as Thucydides is generally considered, must have been schooled in the works of earlier poets as were those of his contemporaries whom he would consider his most suitable and likely audience or readership. Like them, Thucydides regarded Homer as a fundamental source of historical information.⁹⁹ Presumably, also, like many other Athenians of that time, Thucydides had been impressed by public readings from the work of Herodotus. Woodman has rightly observed that the reasons expounded by Thucydides at I 1-3 in favour of the superiority of his work compared with those of his predecessors reveal the adoption of the same criteria of evaluation as are found in Herodotus.¹⁰⁰ Together with his fellow-citizen, when still in Athens, Thucydides must have listened to sophistic disputations, the debates in the assembly and the plays performed during the public festivals. Later, he might have chosen to read in public parts of the work he was composing both for assessing the reception of single excerpts and to gain an extra income while in exile.¹⁰¹

Our enquiry focuses on this interrelationship between Thucydides and his cultural context in the attempt to see to what extent earlier and contemporary authors might have influenced his work and where substantial traces of different influences are still detectable. Because most Greek literature was designed for performance, it seems appropriate to examine the oral features attested in different literary genres and verify if the text of Thucydides satisfies in any way similar requirements. In this thesis I offer a number of separate discussions of sections of Thucydides' work, which for various reasons seemed to be candidates for possible separate performance or

⁹⁹ Cf. Thuc. II 9-11.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. A.J. Woodman (1988, 6): "Thucydides wishes his own work to be seen in terms of that of Herodotus".

¹⁰¹ Thucydides refers to his own exile in V 26. Note that L. Canfora (1999) does not believe that Thucydides was ever exiled.

publication.¹⁰² In each discussion I try to isolate self-contained parts of the *History* in which a prominent source of influence seems to be detectable. It will emerge, in fact, that various sections have a peculiar character. Together with parts in which the Herodotean flavour is recognisable, we find others where the historian seems to be competing with the orators, the tragedians or the authors of wisdom literature, epinician odes, or medical treatises. In my concluding chapter I shall gather together the most important aspects of the question of performance and publication that I have raised in these chapters and offer a tentative view of the likelihood that parts of Thucydides' work were presented to a Greek speaking world during his lifetime.

¹⁰² The disposition of the chapters will follow the order in which these different sections figure in Thucydides' work.

CHAPTER ONE

The excursus on Pausanias and Themistocles: analysis of some digressions in Book One

The aim of the present chapter is to analyse the excursus on Themistocles and Pausanias as narrated by Thucydides in Book One, chapters 128-138.¹ This book presents more digressions than the other parts of the *History*, the Pausanias and Themistocles' excursus, the Archaeology (I 1-23) and the Pentacontaetia (I 89-118) all interrupt the chronological progression of the facts reported.² This chapter will analyse the structure and the content of the excursus on Pausanias and Themistocles and its relation to other sections of the book. The aim is to determine why this digression appears like a self-contained account and whether that quality may be explained by hypothesising that this section was composed earlier and was originally independent of the context of Book One.

The *Histories* of Herodotus are the only surviving example of ancient historical prose where self-contained accounts have been inserted and organised into an overall narrative on the Persian War, and so they constitute a perfect point of comparison for our study on the excursuses in Thucydides.³ To say that parts of the first book of Thucydides share characteristics of Herodotus' writings does not appear to be a new idea. In the case of the present excursus, in particular, Gomme and Westlake have already pointed out its Herodotean flavour.⁴ A study by Hornblower has recently

¹ The word *excursus* in reference to the digression on Pausanias and Themistocles in Book One is the term normally used in the standard commentaries on Thucydides, cf. A. W. Gomme (*HCT* I, 431), S. Hornblower (1991, 211), L. Canfora (1996, 1207).

² On the digressions in the first book of Thucydides see N.G.L.Hammond (1940, 149-51) who believes that the mention of the 'Curse of the Goddess' and the excursus on Pausanias and Themistocles "do not seem essential to the main structure of thought on which Book I is based" (p.149). K.Ziegler (1929, 58-67) argues that these different excurses in the first book might be explained as first attempts to compose a work of history in accordance with Herodotean criteria, a plan that was later abandoned. The Herodotean characteristic of the book has been also noted by L.Canfora (1996, 1203-1210). But cf. S.Hornblower (1991, 202-3), who draws attention to the skillful organisation of the final sections of Book One and to the balanced arrangement of the different stories introduced. A.Momigliano (1992, 89) considers this excursus to be one of the sections of Thucydides with an Herodotean character.

³ On the excursuses in Herodotus see J.Cobet (1971), G.De Sanctis (1951, 23-45). For the structure of the *History* of Herodotus see H.R.Immerwahr (1966) and S.Cagnazzi (1975, 385-423).

⁴ See A.W.Gomme (*HCT*, I, 431 ff.) and H.D.Westlake (1969, 138ff.) and (1977, 95-110).

shown that parts of the historical information given in the account of Pausanias and Themistocles, together with other parts of Thucydides, can only be understood by a reader with a thorough knowledge of the historical events as related by Herodotus. In other words, the text of Thucydides presupposes that of his predecessor.⁵ Nonetheless, a further analysis aiming to discover other Herodotean features in the first book of Thucydides could still be attempted. It is the common opinion that the different λόγοι in Herodotus were originally independent accounts suitable to be orally delivered. The oral transmission of a written text remained a common practice even after the written publication made its appearance. But oral transmission implies a written text suitable for being read aloud or performed. Some particular structural features that have been singled out in the narrative of Herodotus have been thought to satisfy the requirements for a performance.⁶ Different λόγοι deal with different self-contained accounts. Initial and final statements allow the public to recognise the beginning and the end of a story, and repeated sentences are used to help the audience follow its development.⁷ Also, those passages in which Herodotus seems to pass a judgement or to anticipate a question have been interpreted as traces of techniques developed by oral narratives for dealing with anticipated reactions by audiences.⁸ While narrating historical facts, Herodotus often seems to develop his narrative in accordance with *topoi* found in earlier oral traditions.⁹ The occurrence of these or similar features will be examined in some sections of the first book of Thucydides. The present aim is to ascertain to what extent the oral character ascribed to the work of Herodotus is still detectable in parts of the *History* of Thucydides.¹⁰

⁵ See S.Hornblower (1992, 141-154)

⁶ On the oral transmission see R. Thomas (1992, 102 ff.), on the oral character of the *Histories* of Herodotus see D. Fehling (1989), H.R.Immerwahr (1966), J.A.S. Evans (1991), B.Hemmerdinger (1981), J.A.K. Thomson (1935) and F. Hartog (1988). G.Nagy (1987, 175-84) discusses the role of Herodotus as a λόγιος, a master of oral tradition in prose. S.Cagnazzi (1975, 385-423) advances a possible identification of the different λόγοι included in Herodotus' work.

⁷ On the different types of final statements see the categorisation made by H.R.Immerwahr (1966, 52ff.).

⁸ On audiences' reactions in Herodotus see J. A. S. Evans (1991, 100 ff.).

⁹ On the connection between some of the themes dealt in the *Histories* and earlier popular traditions see O. Regenbogen (1962, 57-109).

¹⁰ L.Canfora (1982, 77-84) and (1996, 1203-10) notes the possibility that some sections of the first book of the *History* are suitable for performance, but he does not offer any analysis of the text by way of support.

The logos on Pausanias is introduced at chapter 128, with the apparent intention of recounting an act of sacrilege in which the Spartan Pausanias was involved. Thucydides, in fact, explains the charges made by the Spartans against the Athenians during the year between the declaration of war and the beginning of the hostilities. The Lacedaemonians, in search of some good pretexts for making war, laid against their opponents old charges of involvement in sacrilegious acts and called on them to drive out the consequent curse. The unsuccessful attempt of Cylon to seize the acropolis of Athens and the subsequent killing of the persons taking part in the act, perpetrated by the *archons* near a sacred area, became once again a matter of dispute. The way in which Thucydides narrates this episode reminds us of the narrative style of Herodotus.¹¹ Canfora has pointed out that, contrary to Thucydides' common practice, no exact chronological indication is given. The account is introduced without any connective particle linking it to the preceding sentence. This technique, according to Canfora is found in orally delivered texts when the author wants to draw the attention of an audience on a new story which is due to start.¹²

Καὶ πρῶτον μὲν πρέσβεις πέμψαντες οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἐκέλευον τοὺς Ἀθηναίους τὸ ἄγος ἐλαύνειν τῆς θεοῦ· τὸ δὲ ἄγος ἦν τοιόνδε. Κύλων ἦν Ἀθηναῖος ἀνὴρ....

“And first the Lacedaemonian envoys bade the Athenians drive out the *curse of the goddess*. The curse was as follows. Cylon was an Athenian...”(Thuc. I.126. 2).

Moreover, Thucydides recounts how Cylon misinterpreted the oracle and chose to seize the acropolis during the wrong festival. The character of this account and the unusual interest shown by Thucydides in the interpretation of oracles, contribute to the Herodotean flavour of the whole episode.¹³ The Athenian counter-demand that the

¹¹ In reference to I 126 the *Scholia ad Thucydidem* wrote: τὸ διήγημα τὸ κατὰ τὸν Κύλωνα τὴν σαφήνειάν τινες θαυμάσαντες, εἶπον, ὅτι λέων ἐγέλασεν ἐνταῦθα, λέγοντες περὶ Θουκυδίδου. Note that Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*On Thuc.* c.5) recognises that the earlier historians who preceded Thucydides used to write accounts whose style of exposition was σαφής. A clear narrative style should not therefore be considered as exclusive to Herodotus' writing. The story of Cylon also appears in Herodotus V 70-72. E.C.Marchant (1964, XV-XVI) notes that: “the account of Cylon's conspiracy in c.126.7 is an amplified and corrected version of Herodotus V. 71, the conduct of the Alcmaeonidae being put in a less favourable light by Thucydides”.

¹² Cf. L.Canfora (1996, 1250-51). See also L. Canfora (1982, 81).

¹³ Cf. L.Canfora (1996, 1250) comments that here Thucydides seems to side with those who believed in oracles in saying that Cylon had chosen ‘the wrong festival’ when he decided to engage in such an enterprise. Gomme's comment (*HCT*, I, 425) is more generic in tone: “Thucydides, when he does

Spartans drive out the pollution issuing from another sacrilege, in which the Spartan Pausanias was involved, is then reported.

ἐκέλευον δὲ καὶ τὸ τῆς Χαλκιοῖκου ἄγος ἐλαύνειν αὐτούς· ἐγένετο δὲ τοῖόνδε...

“And the Athenians also bade them drive out the curse of Athena of the Brazen House. And this is the way it was incurred.” (Thuc. I. 128.2)

Δὲ καὶ is used to connect the present account with the preceding report on the Cylon affair.¹⁴ The introductory sentence seems again to preannounce to the public that a new story is going to be recounted. Both at chapter 126 and at 128 the introductory words are followed by mention of the person who plays the role of the main character in the following story: respectively Cylon and Pausanias. But the precise correspondence between these two accounts is confined to these first sentences. The account of the Cylon affair is, strictly speaking, concerned only with the sacrilege and occupies one chapter. In contrast, the story that follows it takes the reader through a full account of the events connected with the final stages of Pausanias’ life before it reaches the actual act of sacrilege at chapter 134. There is nothing in the initial statement to suggest that Thucydides is going to recount so much of the life of Pausanias. The public only expects to hear about the sacrilege in which he was involved, so that the narrative develops contrary to expectation, an unusual feature in Thucydides.

Anyone reading the sequence of events as narrated from the beginning of the *History* would also wonder why at chapter 128 Thucydides relates certain episodes of the life of Pausanias which he has already mentioned earlier in chapters 94 and 95.

ἐπειδὴ Πausανίας ὁ Λακεδαιμόνιος τὸ πρῶτον μεταπεμφθεὶς ὑπὸ Σπαρτιατῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς ἐν Ἑλλησπόντῳ καὶ κριθεὶς ὑπ’ αὐτῶν

digress (and this whole digression is irrelevant to his main narrative), allows himself to mention matters which he felt were of interest for their own sake”.

¹⁴ A study on the structure of ancient αἵνοι by E.Fraenkel (1920, 237-9) has shown that the use of a δὲ καὶ connection, a common characteristic of the paratactic style, functions in the sphere of ancient oral literature as a fixed formula. We will see in the following chapters other similar examples of a temporal connection being used to introduce a new exposition present in Thucydides and in contemporary orally delivered texts.

ἀπελύθη μὴ ἀδικεῖν, δημοσίᾳ μὲν οὐκέτι ἐξεπέμφθη, ἰδίᾳ δὲ αὐτὸς τριήρη λαβὼν Ερμιονίδα ἄνευ Λακεδαιμονίων ἀφικνεῖται ἐς Ελλήσποντον, τῷ μὲν λόγῳ ἐπὶ τὸν Ελληνικὸν πόλεμον, τῷ δὲ ἔργῳ τὰ πρὸς βασιλέα πράγματα πράσσειν, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἐπεχείρησεν, ἐφιέμενος τῆς Ελληνικῆς ἀρχῆς.

“After Pausanias the Lacaedaemonian had been recalled by the Spartans, on the first occasion, from his command on the Hellespont, and on trial had been acquitted of wrong-doing, he was never sent out again in a public capacity, but privately and on his own account he took a trireme of Hermione without authority of the Lacaedaemonians and came to the Hellespont, to take part as he pretended in the Persian war, but in reality to carry on an intrigue with the Great King - an enterprise to which he had set his hand in the first instance also, his aim being to become master of all Hellas.”(Thuc. I. 128. 3)

These words in chapter 128 devoted to the early stage of the career of Pausanias repeat what Thucydides has already said at chapter 94 where Pausanias, son of Cleombrotus is introduced. The Lacedaemonians, it is said there, recalled Pausanias from Byzantium, where he held the governorship of the city: he was accused of wrongdoing (ἀδικία πολλή, I. 95.3) by the Greeks, and his behaviour seemed an aping of despotic power rather than the conduct of a general (τυραννίδος μᾶλλον ἐφάνετο μίμησις ἢ στρατηγία, I. 95.3). On his return to Lacedaemon, Pausanias goes on trial, yet on the principal charges he is acquitted of misconduct (τὰ δὲ μέγιστα ἀπολύεται μὴ ἀδικεῖν, I. 95.5), for he was accused most of all of treasonable relations with the Persians, and it seemed to be a very clear case (κατηγορεῖτο δὲ αὐτοῦ οὐχ ἥκιστα μηδισμὸς καὶ ἐδόκει σαφέστατον εἶναι, I. 95.5). As a consequence of the indictment, the Lacedaemonians decide not to send him back out as commander (καὶ ἐκεῖνον μὲν οὐκέτι ἐκπέμπουσιν ἄρχοντα, I. 95.6).

As the comparison between the two passages clearly shows, four major points regarding the career of Pausanias are recalled in both sections: the trial at Sparta, his acquittal on the principal charges, his supposedly certain collaboration with the Persian government and the fact that he is then banned from holding a command outside the Peloponnese. This extensive repetition at chapter 128 of data already mentioned a few chapters earlier seems unjustified. The gap between the two accounts on Pausanias is quite narrow and a reader of a continuous text at the beginning of our logos should still be able to remember these events. These

repetitions should therefore be considered as a sign of *inconsistency* within the overall structure of Book One.

Further consideration of the two sections on Pausanias raises other difficulties. One might argue that Thucydides included a summary of the first part of the career of Pausanias at chapter 128 so as to enable readers to understand the following development of the story: the second mission to Hellespont carried on by Pausanias “privately”. In that case, the use of repetition might be said to be for the sake of clarity. However, chapter 95 also mentions this second expedition, which takes place after Pausanias has been acquitted in the first trial in Sparta, when he is said to have embarked and sailed to the Hellespont without the Ephors’ consent. The reader would expect an account of this second expedition at this point. However, that expectation is not fulfilled.

After mentioning the second voyage to the Hellespont, Thucydides goes back again to narrate the earlier mission of Pausanias to Byzantium and tells of the ἀρχή of the relations between the Spartan general and the king of Persia.

Εὐεργεσίαν δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦδε πρῶτον ἐς βασιλέα κατέθετο καὶ τοῦ παντὸς πράγματος ἀρχὴν ἐποιήσατο·

“He (Pausanias) had namely first laid up for himself with the King a store of gratitude in the following circumstances, and thus the whole affair had begun” (Thuc. 128.4)

The use of flashbacks is rare in Thucydides. These stylistic devices interrupt the chronological flow of the narrative and in this example they create a sort of digression within a digression. Both these features are normally avoided in Thucydides, but are quite commonly found in Herodotus.¹⁵

In the present case a further difficulty arises. If the account of the first campaign of Pausanias against Byzantium is reported in chapters 94 and 95, why does Thucydides not include the report on the relations that occurred *at that time* between the general and the Persian King *at that point* in the narrative? A reference to these events made at chapters 94-95 would have been perfectly at ease in that context and would not have interrupted the chronological account of events.

A look at the syntactical structure employed at the beginning of our digression

¹⁵ Cf. the discussion in Gomme (1954, 91 ff.) on the technique of inserting one digression within another used by Herodotus and before him by Homer in the *Iliad*.

again reminds us of Herodotus. We have already briefly mentioned that Herodotus often employs introductory statements. Whenever the audience receives information that anticipates the content of the following narrative, we have what is called an *anticipatory statement*. The sentence used by Thucydides to introduce the report of Pausanias' contacts with the Persians sounds precisely like such an *introductory and anticipatory statement*. Ἀπὸ τοῦδε anticipates the account to follow and, as often in Herodotus, a key word for the understanding of the events is introduced. In this case it is the εὐεργεσία, which Pausanias claimed to have done the king and that will be at the centre of the following story. It can hardly be accidental that the same word appears again in the letter sent in reply by the King to Pausanias at chapter 129. After taking Byzantium, Pausanias sends Persian prisoners back to the King. By means of an interpolated clause the explanation is given that Byzantium had been held by the Medes and some kinsmen of the King were captured when the city fell. The text of the letter written by Pausanias to the king then follows.

ἔπεμψε δὲ καὶ ἐπιστολὴν τὸν Γόγγυλον φέροντα αὐτῷ· ἐνεγέγραπτο δὲ τάδε ἐν αὐτῇ, ὡς ὕστερον ἀνηγρέθη· “Παυσανίας ὁ ἡγεμὼν τῆς Σπάρτης τούσδε τέ σοι χαρίζεσθαι βουλόμενος ἀποπέμπει δορὶ ἐλών, καὶ γνῶμην ποιῶμαι, εἰ καὶ σοὶ δοκεῖ, θυγατέρα τε τὴν σὴν γῆμαι καὶ σοὶ Σπάρτην τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην Ἑλλάδα ὑποχείριον ποιῆσαι. Δυνατὸς δὲ δοκῶ εἶναι ταῦτα πράξαι μετὰ σοῦ βουλευόμενος. Εἰ οὖν τί σε τούτων ἀρέσκει, πέμπε ἄνδρα πιστὸν ἐπὶ θάλασσαν δι’ οὗ τὸ λοιπὸν τοὺς λόγους ποιησόμεθα”.

“And he also sent a letter by Gongylus to the King, in which the following was written, as was afterwards discovered: ‘Pausanias, the Spartan commander, wishing to do you a favour, sends you back these men whom he took with the spear. And I make the proposal, if it seems good to you also, to marry your daughter and to make Sparta and the rest of Hellas subject to you. And I am able, I think, to accomplish these things with the help of your counsel. If any of these things pleases you, send a trusty man to the sea, and through him we shall in future confer’.”(Thuc. I. 128. 7)

Many scholars have questioned the authenticity of the document and argued that this is the kind of material one would expect Herodotus to offer as historical evidence rather than Thucydides.¹⁶ Westlake¹⁷ argues that the specific term τάδε used to

¹⁶ On problems related to the authenticity and the possible source from whom the text of the letter reached Thucydides, besides the main comments to the texts, see M.Lang (1967-68, 79-85), A.S.Schieber (1980, 396-405).

introduce the letter, instead of a more generic τοιάδε (used by Thucydides, to present the letter written by Nicias in Book Seven, 11-15), might attest the authenticity of the document, which Thucydides had possibly discovered in the work of some predecessor.¹⁸

Further comparison with Herodotus highlights some other aspects of Pausanias' letter to Xerxes. In that letter there are three major points, raised by Pausanias: (a) the εὐεργεσία (favour) performed for the king, which consists in the return of the prisoners, (b) the promise to make Sparta and the rest of Hellas subject to Xerxes, and (c) the request to approve and act on the proposal, made in a very polite way (εἰ οὖν τί σε τούτων ἀρέσκει. ...).

There is a very similar setting in Herodotus for the letter sent by Harpagus to Cyrus (I. 124). Harpagus sends a letter to Cyrus, concealed inside a hare, and the writing said thus (τάδε). Wishing to persuade Cyrus to kill Astyages, Harpagus reminds him that Astyages had already tried to kill him in the past and that he is only alive thanks to the Gods and to Harpagus himself. He then reminds him of all he has suffered for his sake. He promises him that he will rule over "all the land that Astyages ruled" and concludes the letter by inviting his addressee to be persuaded by his words and carry out his proposal. It is clear that the tripartite scheme of *favour - promise of power - appeal for the fulfilment of the plan* that we saw in Thucydides is also present in the letter quoted by Herodotus. This similarity may be accidental, but it seems more likely to be an indication of a link between the two texts. My idea is not that Thucydides is copying from an example of a letter which he found in Herodotus, but rather that we are looking at a report of a written text where motifs typically found in ancient writings are developed.¹⁹ It is precisely the presence in Pausanias' letter of themes already typical that makes this text sound very Herodotean. How this argument relates to the inquiry on the authenticity of the letter as reported by Thucydides, is an issue that is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

Returning to the analysis of the excursus on Pausanias in Thucydides, another

¹⁷ Cf. H.D. Westlake (1977, 102 ff.).

¹⁸ Gomme (*HCT* I, 432) also notes the presence of τάδε. He also argues that the vocabulary used in the letter includes poetic expressions (see for example δορὶ ἐλώων referring to the captives at Thuc. I 128. 7).

¹⁹ On the survivals of *topoi* in the *Histories* of Herodotus, see D. Fehling (1989, 48 and 180 ff.).

Herodotean touch may be seen in the sentence attached to the letter: τοσαῦτα μὲν ἡ γραφή ἐδήλου “so much the letter disclosed” (Thuc. I. 128.7).

The sentence has a summary *character* (τοσαῦτα) and marks the end of the present report about the correspondence. Ξέρξης δὲ ἡσθη τε τῇ ἐπιστολῇ“Xerxes was delighted for the letter”, Thucydides says, again, a Herodotean expression according to Gomme.²⁰ The king’s written reply follows, also introduced by τὰδε (Thuc.I.129.3), and both Gomme and Hornblower have already noticed a considerable density of expressions belonging to oriental traditions and inscriptions in this text.²¹

As a consequence of his favourable response:

Ταῦτα λαβὼν ὁ Πausανίας τὰ γράμματα, ὧν καὶ πρότερον ἐν μεγάλῳ ἁξιώματι ὑπὸ τῶν Ελλήνων διὰ τὴν Πλαταιᾶσιν ἡγεμονίαν, πολλῶ τότε μᾶλλον ἦρτο

“When Pausanias received this letter, although even before this he had been held in high consideration by the Hellenes because he had led them at Plataea, he was then far more elated ...”²² (Thuc. I. 130 .1)

Because Thucydides says that at that time Pausanias was held in high esteem by the Hellenes, we should consider this part of the narrative as still concerned with the events referred in chapter 94, at the time when Pausanias was in command of the Greeks. After the siege of Byzantium, in fact, the violent behaviour of the general (βιαίου ὄντος, Thuc. I 94.2) had caused discontent and “the Hellenes, especially the Ionians, became disaffected” towards him (οἱ τε ἄλλοι Ἕλληνες ἡχθοντο καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα οἱ Ἴωνες ...,Thuc. I. 95.1). No further explanation about the nature of this violence had been appended at chapter 94, where we might have expected that a substantial reason for the hostility to Pausanias would have been given. Instead,

²⁰ See A. W. Gomme (*HCT* I, 432) and S. Hornblower (1991, 215) who also refers to the article written on the subject by D.Lateiner , ‘No laughing Matter : A literary tactic in Herodotus’ , *TAPA*, 107, (1977) 201 ff.

²¹ Cf. A.W.Gomme (*HCT* I, 432) and S.Hornblower (1991, 216).

²² Pausanias’ role at Plataea will be recalled again in the second book when the Plateans will remind the Spartans of the kindness shown by Pausanias towards them after the battle of Plataea (Thuc. II. 71 and III. 54. 4; 58. 5). As we will argue in the chapter on the Plataean trial, the information that the historian gives on the Plataean campaign seems to be in large part dependent on his knowledge of the text of Herodotus. Cf. also S.Hornblower (1992, 145) who notes the relationship between the narrative on the escape from Plataea in Thucydides’ Book Three and the account of the battle of Plataea in Herodotus’ Book Nine.

Thucydides' account of his misconduct and of the various acts, which caused the anger of the Greeks and motivated his subsequent expulsion from Byzantium is given in chapter 130. Here it is said that Pausanias could no longer bring himself to live in the usual manner of his people, but:

Σκευάς τε Μηδικὰς ἐνδυόμενος ἐκ τοῦ Βυζαντίου ἐξήει καὶ διὰ τῆς Θράκης πορευόμενον αὐτὸν Μῆδοι καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι ἐδορυφόρουν, τράπεζάν τε Περσικὴν παρετίθετο καὶ κατέχειν τὴν διάνοιαν οὐκ ἐδύνατο,

“clad himself in Persian apparel whenever he went forth from Byzantium, and when he travelled through Thrace a body-guard of Medes and Egyptians attended him; he had his table served in Persian style, and indeed could not conceal his real purpose” (Thuc. I. 130 .1)

Even more interesting for us are the sentences that follow:

ἔργοις βραχέσι προυδήλου ἃ τῇ γνώμῃ μειζόνως ἐς ἔπειτα ἐμελλε πράξειν. Δυσπρόσοδόν τε αὐτὸν παρείχε καὶ τῇ ὀργῇ οὕτω χαλεπῇ ἐχρήτο ἐς πάντας ὁμοίως ὥστε μηδὲνα δύνασθαι προσιέναι· δι’ ὅπερ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους οὐχ ἥκιστα ἡ ξυμμαχία μετέστη.

“...by such trifling acts (Pausanias) showed plainly what greater designs he purposed in his heart to accomplish thereafter. And so he made himself difficult of access, and indulged in such a violent temper towards everybody that no one could come near him; and this was one of the chief reasons why the allies went over to the Athenians”(Thuc. I. 130. 2)

As we can see, all the main actions making up the Persian attitude of Pausanias are recalled in this chapter. There seems no doubt that the βίαιος attitude of Pausanias referred to at chapter 94, is explicable as the ὀργή and the kind of behaviour shown by him and described at chapter 130. Moreover, the reasons for the allies' shift of alliance as reported at chapter 94, only become clear in the light of the fuller explanation of his behaviour given at chapter 130. Similarly we have already noted that in this first report at chapter 95 Thucydides takes for granted the *Medism* of Pausanias, but does not provide any proof as his correspondence with the king is first reported in the excursus.

There are other anomalies between the first and the second account of Pausanias. When at chapter 94 it is said that Pausanias is acquitted of the charges brought against him, the reason why he is discharged is not given. Moreover, we have seen that Thucydides comments that there was no doubt that Pausanias was guilty of *μηδίζειν*. Such an unqualified comment would surely have puzzled an uninformed reader. If Pausanias' guilt was more or less taken for granted, why was he acquitted? This question finds an exhaustive answer in the course of the excursus. There, the account of Pausanias' first expedition to Byzantium is followed by a complete report of his second recall to Sparta; the Spartans suspect that the plots between him and the Persian king are still being carried on. In spite of different kinds of evidence discovered, the Ephors hesitate to convict Pausanias. The reason given is that *they are normally reluctant to pass judgement against a member of the royal family without indisputable proofs*. Then, the second part of the story of Pausanias in Thucydides describes the slow but steady process by which the Spartans obtain proof of his offences. Only the words said by him in the hearing of witnesses finally provide sufficient evidence for taking action. The statement that the *Ephors* are normally unwilling to convict a member of a royal family unless solid evidence against him is brought forward, is the explanation missing at chapter 94, where the reader cannot understand *why*, if the charge of *medismos* against Pausanias was thought to be well-founded, he was acquitted at the first trial. We should in fact suppose that the Spartans on that occasion stuck to the same attitude shown by them at the time of Pausanias' second recall to Sparta: they were unwilling to accuse a member of the royal family without solid proof.²³

What do these parallels between different chapters tell us? These repetitions or omissions of information in the text might be considered as inconsistencies, but in the light of the evidence we have so far collected, it seems legitimate to advance a different hypothesis. The whole account on the first stage of the career of Pausanias at Byzantium as presented in chapter 128 ff. gives us more details of information than the earlier mention of the same campaign in chapter 94 ff. of Book One. Chapters 94

²³ For an alternative historical interpretation on the career of Pausanias see J. Wolski (1954, 75-94). For the historical problem of *μηδίζειν* at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War see J.L. Myres (1936, 97-105), D.F. Graf (1984, 15-30) and J. Wolski (1973, 3-15).

ff., in fact, introduce a bare summary of the events that will be narrated in extensive form a few chapters later. In a first reference the main issues are touched on: the Medism of Pausanias, the first trial, his “unusual” behaviour in Byzantium and the defection of the allies to the Persian side, but no exhaustive explanation is appended. It could be argued that the reason for these omissions in the earlier chapters was that Thucydides had already conceived the idea of reserving a larger space for the first expedition of Pausanias against Byzantium later on in his book; any additional detail given at chapter 94 would therefore have been unnecessary. But we could also hypothesise the opposite case: the excursus on Pausanias and Themistocles, which contained that fuller account, might have been a self-contained piece of work that the author had already composed and later decided to insert inside the overall structure of Book One. That would also be the reason why the first campaign at Byzantium is mentioned during the excursus in spite of breaking the chronological sequence of the events reported. On this hypothesis, the information given in chapter 94 ff. should not be viewed as incomplete, but should rather be considered as preliminary to what will be recounted later on in the book.

If the account on Pausanias, as appears from chapter 128 ff., was an account independent of the context of Book One, it seems feasible to suppose that it once existed in the form of a self-contained exposition, let us say a *λόγος* on the life of Pausanias. We have already pointed out the Herodotean characteristics traceable in the first part of the account, it is therefore time to verify whether the same features might be singled out in its second part. Here it is described what happened to Pausanias after the Ephors recalled him to Sparta a second time (Thuc. I.131 ff.).

The compressed and complex syntactical constructions often used by Thucydides are replaced here by a simple, discursive style. Sentences of transition mark the passage from one stage of the report of the events to the following one and make it easy to follow the course of the events recounted. It is worth considering some of these stylistic features.

We have already said that Thucydides’ narrative marks out all the different steps taken by the Ephors before proceeding to the final indictment of Pausanias. In fact, the different elements that could be held in favour of a conviction are recalled. First, the elegiac couplet inscribed by Pausanias on the tripod at Delphi at the time of

the Persian Wars, where the general claims for himself the credit for having destroyed the Persian host, is taken as evidence of wrongdoing and as a prelude to his present design. Thucydides includes the text of the inscription in his account and it has been argued that such a use of epigraphic evidence is unusual in the *History* and may be viewed as another Herodotean touch.²⁴ Besides, this evidence is not contemporary with the second recall of Pausanias and the text does not give a full explanation why the inscription is taken up as a proof against the general only *at this stage* of the events.

Further elements of evidence are then collected by the Ephors:

“They were informed also that he was intriguing with the Helots (ἐς τοὺς Εἰλωτας πρᾶσσειν τι αὐτόν, ...); and it was even so, for he was promising them freedom and citizenship if they would join him in a revolt and help him accomplish his whole plan. But not even then (ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ ὥς ...), not relying on certain Helots who had turned informers, did they think it best to take harsh measures against him; they adhered to their usual method in dealing with men of their own class - not to be hasty, in the case of a Spartan, in adopting an irrevocable decision unless they had indisputable proofs (χρώμενοι τῷ τρόπῳ ὥπερ εἰώθασιν ἐς σφᾶς αὐτούς, μὴ ταχεῖς εἶναι περὶ ἀνδρὸς Σπαρτιάτου ἄνευ ἀναμφισβητήτων τεκμηρίων βουλευσάι τι ἀνήκεστον)” (Thuc. I. 132. 5)

Some historians have argued that if Pausanias had really plotted with the Helots, this fact could have been taken seriously as the basis for an indictment.²⁵ The text gives reason to support this historical interpretation. “Not even then”, Thucydides says, did the Spartans take any action against Pausanias, the reason being the attitude they used to follow in these cases. This explanation repeats what Thucydides had already said at the beginning of chapter 132 when he states that the Ephors did not want to make charges against a member of the royal family without a φανερόν σημεῖον.

The story of a man from Argilus, which then follows, is presented as the final proof needed. It begins: “but at last, as it is said,...” (πρίν γε δὴ αὐτοῖς, ὥς λέγεται..., Thuc. I. 132. 5). Nonetheless this proof (the discovery of the content of the letter sent by Pausanias to the Persians and reported to the Ephors) still does not

²⁴ See S. Hornblower (1991, 218) and for the use of inscriptions as a category of conventional proof in Herodotus see D. Fehling (1989, 133-40). Note, however, the report of the words inscribed on the altar in Thuc. VI.54.7 and on a gravestone in Thuc. VI.59.3. These inscriptions figure in the context of the excursus on Harmodius and Aristogitones, another episode sharing an Herodotean flavour.

²⁵ See G.L.Cawkwell (1970, 51).

satisfy the need for conclusive evidence. When the Argilian showed the Ephors the letter they, Thucydides says, “were at last more nearly convinced (μᾶλλον μὲν ἐπίστευσαν), but they wished besides to hear with their own ears...”(Thuc. I.133.1).

While the account on the Argilian is introduced as the final stage of the progressive quest for conclusive evidence, our expectation is frustrated when the Spartans demand a further proof: to be eyewitnesses. A new account is therefore introduced: the story of the hut divided by a partition, built to allow the Ephors to listen to the words said inside by Pausanias to the Argilian. Thanks to this stratagem the conclusive evidence is at last found. Thucydides says the Ephors ἤσθοντο πάντα σαφῶς (Thuc. I. 133. 1) on that occasion and at the beginning of the next chapter it is repeated that they ἀκούσαντες δὲ ἀκριβῶς τότε... and βεβαίως δὲ ἤδη εἰδότες (Thuc. I. 134 .1). These repetitions mark out the ending of the process of investigation. While not strictly necessary for understanding the account, the emphasis on the result obtained is justified precisely because the expectation of the public for a final result has already been frustrated several times.

The whole narrative on the second stage of the career of Pausanias seems to be organised through the progressive report of proofs, which, in spite of their expected value, never satisfy the Ephors. The expected conclusion of the investigation, which has been awaited since the first proof has been introduced, is therefore deferred each time a new kind of evidence is put forward. The technique of frustrating the expectation of an audience with continuous postponements may be considered a *dramatic feature* whose function is *to raise the tension and the attention of the public* towards the expected ending. Moreover, except for the mention of the supposed collaboration of Pausanias with the Helots, each proof provides an opportunity to bring into the excursus a new short story: the topic of the tripod at Delphi, the correspondence disclosed by the Argilian and the hut built up to hear the words spoken by Pausanias. Here again, we find the technique of including a digression within another, attested in oral literature before Thucydides.

As some commentators have already pointed it out, these short stories exhibit an Herodotean flavour²⁶, however, it is worth asking why this is so. Some of the themes found in these brief accounts present similarities with the work of Herodotus. The discovery of correspondence containing a message to kill somebody recalls

²⁶ See H.D.Westlake (1977, 95-110) and W.R.M. Lamb (1914).

Herodotus III 128. 3-5 where Bagaeus gives to the scribe the letter wherein it is written to slay Oroetes.²⁷ Also, the motif of a person who hides himself behind a wall in order to spy on the actions of another reminds the story of Gyges hidden inside a bedroom in order to spy on the wife of Candaules (Hdt. I. 7 ff.). The mention of the tripod obviously calls for the many epigraphic sources collected by Herodotus and the tripod at Delphi mentioned at Hdt. VIII 81-82.

Looking at the style, these short stories have been composed in a clear, narrative structure. We have already singled out the use in this section of repeated sentences. As well as having a dramatic function, in the present context these repetitions also perform their normal function of helping the audience to follow the course of events in the narrative. The same could be said of the anticipatory or summary statements that are found in these pages. Thucydides reports the disclosure of the letter made by the Argilian with these words:

Λύει τὰς ἐπιστολάς, ἐν αἷς ὑπονοήσας τι τοιοῦτον προσεπεστάλθαι καὶ αὐτὸν ἡῦρεν ἐγγεγραμμένον κτείνειν

“He opened the letter and in fact found written therein, as he suspected he should find something of the sort to have been directed, an order for his own death” (Thuc. I. 132.5)

What the actual content of the letter was, the order to kill the Argilian, is only stated at the end of the sentence (here also note the emphatic position of αὐτόν), but at that point the unfavourable result of the investigation has been already pre-announced to the audience because in the previous clause it is said that the Argilian found his suspicions confirmed. A similar method of exposition follows for the report of the next episode.

When Thucydides refers for the first time to the information obtained thanks to the device of the hut with a double wall, before even saying what were the arguments used by Pausanias on that occasion, he points out that this time the Ephors ἤσθοντο πάντα σαφῶς (Thuc. I, 133). The public knows that the stratagem will meet with success before the proper narrative reaches that point. Again, later on it is

²⁷ O.Longo (1978a, 516 ff.) argues that the importance ascribed in Herodotus to the written text of the letter is a symptom of the passage from orality to literacy: the written text itself is taken as a “*medium deputato alla comunicazione della verità*”.

said that Pausanias had understood he was going to be arrested, before the *ephor* carrying the bad news came forward to speak (Thuc. I, 134). Thucydides makes his public able to see in outline the development of the events in advance and then presents the detailed exposition.

The account of Pausanias concludes at chapter 134. The general is suffering from starvation inside a temple; and as soon as he is taken outside he dies and the Spartans want to bury him somewhere near the city. Mention of the sacrilege follows:

Ο δὲ θεὸς ὁ ἐν Δελφοῖς τὸν τε τάφον ὕστερον ἔχρησε τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις μετενεγκεῖν οὐπὲρ ἀπέθανε [...] καὶ ὥς ἄγος αὐτοῖς ὄν τὸ πεπραγμένον δύο σώματα ἀνθ' ἑνὸς τῇ Χαλκιοίκῳ ἀποδοῦναι. Οἱ δὲ ποιησάμενοι χαλκοῦς ἀνδριάντας δύο ὥς ἀντὶ Παυσανίου ἀνέθεσαν.

“The god at Delphi afterwards warned the Lacedaemonians by oracle to transfer him to the place where he died [...] and because their act had brought a curse upon them they should recompense Athena of the Brazen House with two bodies in place of one. So they had two bronze statues made and dedicated them to Athena to be a substitute for Pausanias” (Thuc. I .134).

When an attentive reader remembers that the reason why the excursus had been narrated in the first place was to inform him about the expiation of a sacrilegious act, he might wonder why then, the space actually devoted to the sacrilege itself is so narrow. The account of the actual offence against the god, instead of being a central motif in the present narrative as we would expect, is only briefly mentioned and appears to be the last element needed to complete an overall excursus on the life of Pausanias, not on the sacrilege itself.²⁸ Moreover, since chapter 128 the reader has known that a curse is linked to the temple of Athena of the Brazen House and that such a curse had to be driven out. When, finally, at chapter 134 the sacrilege is related, we would expect to find a declarative clause, something like *ταῦτα / τούτο ἦν...* (this was the act...), a summary expression to inform the audience that at this point the events pre-announced few chapters earlier at the beginning of the excursus are reported.²⁹ Instead the notion makes its appearance in a *causal construction* (ὥς ... τὸ πεπραγμένον), which, literally, has the function of explaining, as if it were

²⁸ On the biographical character of the narrative in the excursus on Pausanias and Themistocles see A.W.Gomme (*HCT* I, 447), G.Méautis (1951, 297-304) and A. Momigliano (1971, 34).

²⁹ The presence of a summary clause at the end of a description is common: cf. for example Thuc. I. 93.8 and I. 124. 3.

something new, that a sacrilege was committed and the consequent pollution had to be driven out. The way in which the offence against Athena is presented at chapter 134, presupposes an audience unacquainted with the event itself, contrary to what we could presume from the beginning of the excursus.

The further course of the narrative confirms the idea that the nature of the sacrilege is not the main issue to be developed in the digression. An account of Themistocles follows as part of the context of the present excursus, although he is not involved in any sacrilegious act.

Τοῦ δὲ μηδισμού τοῦ Πausανίου οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι πρέσβεις πέμπσαντες παρὰ τοὺς Αθηναίους ξυνεπητιῶντο καὶ τὸν Θεμιστοκλέα, ὥς ἡύρισκον ἐκ τῶν περὶ Πausανίαν ἐλέγχων, ἥξιουν τε τοῖς αὐτοῖς κολάζεσθαι αὐτόν.

“But when Pausanias was thus convicted of treasonable dealings with Persia, the Lacedaemonians sent envoys to the Athenians and accused Themistocles also of complicity in the plot, in accordance with discoveries they had made in connection with their investigation about Pausanias; and they demanded that he be punished in the same way”. (Thuc. I. 135)

The final career of Themistocles is thus going to be related because it is connected with the life of Pausanias, not with the sacrilege ascribed to him.³⁰ There are three main motifs narrated: the flight of Themistocles to Corcyra and then to Admetus, the king of the Molossians, the voyage on a merchant vessel which is driven by a storm to Naxos and the letter of Themistocles to Artaxerses, initiating the relations between Themistocles and the Persians which continued till his death.

H. Konishi has shown that the motifs in Themistocles' life as presented in these pages, are comparable with those introduced in the previous chapters on Pausanias.³¹ The similarity between the various stages of their careers would appear to be very close. Konishi has identified eight categories of events placed in mutual

³⁰ A.W.Gomme (HCT I, 447) has argued that the excursus on Themistocles is irrelevant to the narrative, E.M.Carawan (1989, 144-61) that it is awkwardly joined to the succeeding narrative. E.C.Marchant (1964, XXXV) writes: “If the account of Pausanias' end is lengthened out until it becomes practically independent of the main narrative, what are we to say of the appendix about Themistocles? This is wholly irrelevant [...]”.

³¹ Cf. H. Konishi (1970, 52-69), on the parallels between the stories on Pausanias and Themistocles in Thucydides; see also A.J.Podlecki (1976, 293-311). H.R.Rawlings III (1981, 90-117) argues that Pausanias and Themistocles represent respectively a paradigm for the careers of Lysander and Alcibiades as described by Thucydides.

comparison in the excursus and he also believes that Thucydides has deliberately disregarded all the information that did not fit these categories. According to Konishi, the author's intention is to create the impression that: "nothing good about Pausanias is told, and nothing bad about Themistocles is written."³² In spite of the mechanical look that any attempt to categorise the elements of a text inevitably has, Konishi's thesis may help to explain why the excursus ignores important facts of Themistocles' life. We encountered him in chapters 94-96 as the man in charge of the building of the walls of Athens. At that time he enjoyed the favour of the Athenians and was entrusted with organising the defensive strategy of the city. When Themistocles is mentioned again in the present excursus, he is already an exile: being involved in the indictment of Pausanias is just a further sign of that decline he has suffered by the time of his ostracism from Athens.³³ But the actual reason for Themistocles' ostracism is almost ignored by Thucydides. The historian does not explain for what reasons the leader who is triumphant over the Spartans at chapter 96, has subsequently encountered such a change of fortune, just as he also passes by other information in the present excursus. In chapter 136 we are informed that Themistocles was forewarned and fled from the Peloponnesus to Corcyra: "since he was a benefactor of the Corcyraeans" (ὧν αὐτῶν εὐεργέτης). But we are left with the question why he was a benefactor of these people since no further explanation is given. Later Themistocles took lodging with Admetus: "who was not friendly to him" (ὅντα αὐτῷ οὐ φίλον καταλῦσαι, Thuc. I 136.2). Again, we are not informed about the cause of the hostility with the king of the Molossians.

These omissions of information create the impression that the story of Themistocles we gather from Thucydides in Book One lacks some parts or at least has not been treated consequentially in accordance with the order of events, contrary to the practice usually followed by Thucydides. Moreover, the picture drawn in the excursus of Themistocles' falling out of favour, contrasts with the picture of the man presented a few chapters earlier and the text does not provide all the necessary background historical explanations needed to motivate this change.

³² H.Konishi (1970, 66).

³³ For an historical interpretation of the fall of Themistocles see E.M.Carawan (1989, 144-61), A.J.Podlecki (1975), G.L.Cawkwell (1970, 39-58), R.J.Lenardon (1961, 28-40).

Herodotean features are also found in this second part of our excursus. The story of Themistocles at the court of Admetus recalls the motif of the supplication often attested in Herodotus and present in Euripides' *Telephus*.³⁴ The expression οὐ φίλον in reference to Themistocles, used by Thucydides to refer to the hostility of Admetus towards him (I. 136.2) is also found in Herodotus where Themistocles is said to be not a friend of Aristides (Hdt. VIII 79). The text of the letter sent by Themistocles to Artaxerses is reminiscent of the Herodotean scheme already found in Pausanias' letter to the king. Themistocles claims to have been a benefactor of the king, promises to do him a great service and asks for a meeting with Artaxerses after one year. The themes of *benefaction*, *promise* and *request* follow in similar order.

If we consider the style of the narrative, however, the flight of Themistocles is not described through the slow narrative technique already used for narrating the final stage of Pausanias' career. Thucydides makes use of indirect speech to indicate the words said by the fugitive to Admetus and then to the captain, and no anticipatory or summary statements are employed. The report of the events is thus speeded up and the rhythm of the narrative seems to communicate the speed with which the hero takes the different actions. Not by chance, the various stages of the flight, the recovery at the court of Admetus and the voyage with the ship, do not appear as separate and self-contained accounts, as it was for the events linked to the life of Pausanias. The various incidents are fastened together, in such a way as to create the impression of a journey taken in a hurry, in order to escape from the enemies. Only when Themistocles has reached his final destination, Persia, is the use of indirect discourse left aside and the text of the letter reported in full creates a pause in the narrative.³⁵

The letter is followed by a concluding laudatory appraisal of Themistocles, together with an account about his death and burial. Here, the use of introductory λέγεται and λέγουσι and the choice to refer to two different traditions on the death

³⁴ Cf. Hdt. I 158 ff. for the story of Paktyes' supplication at Cumae (the episode of the flight of Paktyes from Sardis to Mytilene and Chios is also in Charon of Lampsacus *FGrHist* 262 F 9) and the account of Aristagoras' supplication at the house of Cleomedes in Hdt. V 51. G.Méautis (1951, 297-304) does not accept the parallel with Euripides, arguing that the character of the story of Telephus as presented in Euripides' play, is different from the episode in Thucydides.

³⁵ A corpus of letters ascribed to Themistocles has been recently discovered, but the majority of scholars seems to incline towards the idea that these epistles are not originally written by Themistocles but composed in the second century AD as a rhetorical exercise. See G.Cortassa - E.Culasso Gastaldi (1990), R.J.Lenardon (1961, 28-40), A.J.Podlecki (1976, 293-311).

of the Athenian remind us again of Herodotus.³⁶ The excursus concludes as follows:

Τὰ μὲν κατὰ Πausανίαν τὸν Λακεδαιμόνιον καὶ Θεμιστοκλέα τὸν
Αθηναῖον, λαμπροτάτους γενομένους τῶν καθ' ἑαυτοὺς Ελλήνων,
οὕτως ἐτελεύτησεν.

“Such was the end of Pausanias the Lacedaemonian and of Themistocles the Athenian, the most distinguished of the Athenians of their time” (Thuc. I. 138.6.)

This impressive sentence is surely a conclusion of a λόγος on the lives of Pausanias and Themistocles, not of an account of the circumstances surrounding certain alleged acts of sacrilege. It summarises, in the manner familiar in Herodotus, what have proved to be the main themes of the excursus, namely, the final stages of the lives of the two most distinguished men of their own time.³⁷ Moreover, as in the case of the last clause on the account on Pausanias, this ending contrasts with the way in which the excursus was introduced at chapter 128, when the reader was led to expect that the main theme to be dealt with will be the purification of the sacrilege committed by the Spartans.

After the excursus, the historical report of the events is resumed in chapter 139 with these words:

Λακεδαιμόνιοι δὲ ἐπὶ μὲν τῆς πρώτης πρεσβείας τοιαῦτα ἐπέταξαν τε
καὶ ἀντεκελεύσθησαν περὶ τῶν ἐναγῶν τῆς ἐλάσεως

“The Lacedaemonians then had on the occasion of their first embassy directed the Athenians, and received a counter demand from them, to take such measures about the expulsion of the accursed.” (Thuc. I. 139)

This is another concluding sentence, another summary statement regarding the content of the previous excursus. A further concluding clause follows after what should be considered as the original end of the λόγος, where the sacrilege is not even

³⁶ On the use of these expressions made by Thucydides see H.D. Westlake (1977, 95-110) and for their frequency in Herodotus see D. Fehling (1989, 157 ff.).

³⁷ Cf. also E.C. Marchant (1964, XXXIII) who notes that: “having arrived at the death of Pausanias, Thucydides wanted to round off the passage by relating the last events in the life of his great contemporary”. S. Hornblower (1991, 212) comments: “The Pausanias-Themistocles excursus shows that Thucydides had an interest in biography; but he was prepared to indulge it only when, as here, there was a non-Greek, specifically a Graeco-Persian angle”.

mentioned precisely because the fact does not receive more than a marginal space in the excursus. Here, Thucydides connects the preceding account with the issue of the sacrilege, as he has already done in chapter 128, in order to connect the excursus within the context of Book One and to justify its presence. Such inconsistencies may be taken as a further indication that the λόγος on Pausanias and Themistocles was an account originally independent of the context of Book One and was subsequently inserted by Thucydides at this point of his work.

The excursus on Pausanias and Themistocles in the context of the first book of the History

The above analysis of Thucydides' digression on Pausanias and Themistocles in Book One appears to have brought to our attention considerable elements in support of the view that this account may have been a self-contained exposition composed in a narrative style suitable for an oral performance. It seems now worth considering the Pausanias and Themistocles excursus in the context of Book One and examining whether similar themes and features are also detectable in other parts of the book. While I was studying the book for such features, the section describing the building of the Athenian walls in chapters 90-93 caught my attention.

The Spartans send an embassy to Athens, urging the Athenians not to rebuild their walls, but rather to join with them in razing those still standing in any city outside the Peloponnesus. Themistocles advises the Athenians to send him to Sparta and to detain the ambassadors from that city until the walls have reached the minimum height necessary for defence. This stratagem succeeds and Themistocles informs the Spartans of the Athenians' plan once he has learnt that the wall had reached an adequate height (I. 90.3). A digression then follows, describing the construction of the wall (III. 93).³⁸ The image of Themistocles in this account is very similar to that in the excursus. He is able to come to the right decision in a difficult situation and in a very short time. It is the same presence of mind that enables him to escape from his enemies during the flight from Greece (I. 136-38). Here, as in the

³⁸ For information on the process of construction of the Athenian walls see E.Harrison (1912, 247-9).

course of the digression, Themistocles is presented as a new Odysseus. The picture that emerges from chapters 90 ff. is very much the same man as described at the end of our excursus:

ἦν γὰρ ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς βεβαιότατα δὴ φύσεως ἰσχὺν δηλώσας καὶ διαφερόντως τι ἐς αὐτὸ μᾶλλον ἑτέρου ἄξιος θαυμάσαι· οἰκεῖα γὰρ ξυνέσει καὶ οὔτε προμαθὼν ἐς αὐτὴν οὐδὲν οὔτ' ἐπιμαθὼν, τῶν τε παραχρῆμα δι' ἐλαχίστης βουλῆς κράτιστος γνώμων καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ἐπὶ πλείστον τοῦ γενησομένου ἄριστος εἰκαστής·

“For indeed Themistocles was a man who had most convincingly demonstrated the strength of his natural sagacity, and was in the very highest degree worthy of admiration in that respect. For by native insight, not reinforced by earlier or later study, he was beyond other men, with the briefest deliberation, both a shrewd judge of the immediate present and wise in forecasting what would happen in the most distant future” (Thuc. I. 138)

It is a fuller picture of Themistocles as he was after the Persian Wars that should lead up to such praise; not one confined to the fugitive, ending his days in exile at the Persian court but one that includes the politician who had the ability to defend the best interests of his city in its dealings with the Spartans. Moreover, both in chapters 90-93 and in the excursus Thucydides reports Themistocles' words in indirect speech. We have already hypothesised that the adoption of indirect speech in the account on the flight could function as a narrative device to stress the speediness of the escape. The same could be said of chapters 90-93, in which the whole process of building the walls is completed in a very short time under Themistocles' direction.

Thucydides makes Themistocles play such a central role in the process of the construction of the walls that the whole story looks like an episode from an account of the life of a political figure, rather than a narrative centred on the defensive strategy adopted by the Athenians in the early stages of their rivalry with the Peloponnesians. Only at chapter 93 do the people of Athens become the main character in the building of the wall. Here, the style is Herodotean and the text echoes the words devoted by Herodotus to the building of the walls of Babylon (Hdt. I. 179). However, the parallel with Herodotus is not the only possible one. In 1977, Mastromarco published an article in which he saw a correspondence between Thucydides I 89-93 and Aristophanes' *Birds*, where the construction of the walls of Cloudcuckoo-ville is

described (vv. 1137 ff.).³⁹ In both texts the size of the structure is conveyed by saying that two wagons could meet and pass each other on the top (*Birds* v.1127 ff., Thuc. I.93.5). The walls of the city of the Birds are laid on stone foundations (v. 1137), as described in Thucydides I .93. 2. Moreover, Peisthetaerus invites everyone to be involved in the process of construction and both hens and chicks take part in the work as well, just as in Thucydides it is stressed that the work was carried out *πανδήμει*, with both *γυναικες* and *παῖδες* helping to carry building materials (*Birds* v.1148-51, Thuc. I.90.3). The walls of Cloudcuckooville are built in a very short time. Similarly in Thucydides it is said that the structure is raised *κατὰ σπουδήν* (*Birds*, v.1165, Thuc. I, 93.1-2).

The conclusion Mastromarco draws from these parallels runs as follows:

“Through the report of the messenger on the building of the walls of Cloudcuckooville, Aristophanes parodies the account of Thucydides on the building of the Themistoclean walls. Three significant points are made the object of parody:

- a) the breadth of the walls (image of the two wagons)
- b) the general participation of the citizens (of both sexes and of all the ages) in the building of the walls
- c) the extraordinarily short time required for the raising of the walls.

The walls of Cloudcuckooville built in order to assert the hegemony of the birds' city over the sky are, in short, the celestial equivalent of the Themistoclean walls raised in order to assert the Athenians' hegemony over the sea.”⁴⁰

If Mastromarco is right in seeing a parallel between these two texts, we can also speculate on another possible link. Peisthetaerus has a central role as co-ordinator of the works for the building of the walls of Cloudcuckooville just as Themistocles is presented by Thucydides as responsible for the idea and the direction of the works in Athens. What Mastromarco does not seem to consider is the possibility that the process of building defensive walls might be considered as a typical act of defence and a symbol of the power achieved by a city-state. A similar situation is also

³⁹ G. Mastromarco (1977, 41-50).

⁴⁰ G. Mastromarco (1977, 45), my translation. “Aristofane, nel resoconto del messaggero sulla costruzione delle mura di Nubicuculia, fa la parodia del racconto tucidideo della costruzione delle mura di Temistocle. E fa la parodia di tre dati significativi:

- a) larghezza delle mura (immagine dei due carri)
- b) partecipazione collettiva dei cittadini (di ambo i sessi e di tutte le età) alla costruzione delle mura
- c) tempi eccezionalmente brevi in cui le mura furono erette.

Le mura di Nubuculia, erette col fine di affermare l'egemonia della città degli uccelli sul cielo, sono, insomma, la proiezione celeste delle mura temistoclee erette con il fine di affermare l'egemonia degli Ateniesi sul mare”.

described in Thucydides' Book Five, where haste and ingenuity are involved as well in the building of the walls surrounding the city of Argos, and there, too, the building is carried on by the whole population (Thuc. V, 82. 5-6). The parallel between Aristophanes' *Birds* and Thucydides' Book One may therefore be considered as an interesting hypothesis, but it must also be viewed with caution. However, it raises the question whether chapters 90-93 of Book One were already known by the time of composition of *Birds* in 414 BC, that is, before the date normally assumed for the publication of Thucydides' work after 404 BC.⁴¹ Because the Herodotean aspect of this section (both in the style and in the arguments introduced) seems to be clear, we might suppose that chapters 90-93 had been orally delivered at some point before *Birds* were composed. But we can go further than that. It is also reasonable to suppose that if a piece of historical narrative of that kind was indeed performed, then it had a specific length and dealt with the development of a self-contained exposition, as some studies conducted on the Herodotean λόγοι have suggested.⁴² It is difficult to imagine that a Thucydidean account of the building of the walls of Athens would have been sufficient in itself for a separate performance. The central role ascribed to Themistocles and some Herodotean characteristics present both in chapters 90-93 and in the longer excursus on Themistocles and Pausanias, give these two sections in Book One a similar appearance. It seems reasonable, therefore, to envisage the account of the construction of the Athenian walls under the direction of Themistocles as originally forming part of a larger λόγος, on the life of Themistocles, which also included the material on him now in the excursus. This original λόγος would then be inserted later into the context of Book One, with the necessary reshaping. The main part of the original λόγος would have formed the excursus that begins with the explanation of the charge of sacrilege levelled against the Spartans, while other sections of it may have been adapted for other contexts or been abandoned altogether. As part of this process, the account of the building of the Athenian walls by Themistocles would have been shifted to an earlier point in Thucydides' general account of the growth of Athenian power. Some data relevant to an account of the life

⁴¹ Note that such a notion is rejected by N. Dunbar (1995, 596), who says that "It is unlikely, however, that Aristophanes is parodying Thucydides himself; his *History* (if it already existed) can hardly have received by 414 the public recitation necessary to make it familiar to many of the audience".

⁴² See S.Cagnazzi (1975, 385-423) T.Long (1987), G.De Sanctis (1951).

of Themistocles, but not to the context of the excursus, would have been omitted from the digression in its present form. The association of events linked to the life of Pausanias and Themistocles would thus create a new λόγος which was of a Herodotean kind but was still innovative. For the first time the lives of two important personages are described in parallel and the episode becomes one of the first examples of parallel biographies before Plutarch. The discursive style and the structure make Pausanias' and Themistocles' excursus suitable to be orally transmitted and perhaps known by the time of composition of *Birds*.⁴³

⁴³ A.Momigliano (1992, 89) argues that the excursus might well be imagined as written at the beginning of the war. He argues that at the first stage of the hostilities it is obviously an appropriate point for this story to be invoked, when the fates of the two leaders of Greece had become once again a matter of topical interest.

CHAPTER TWO

The Funeral Oration of Pericles in Thucydides

Book II 34-47.1

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the Funeral Oration attributed to Pericles in the second book of Thucydides' *History*. Many commentators have already dealt with + this speech and different interpretations have been proposed.¹ It has often been regarded as a piece of work through which the author aims to convey to his contemporary readers and future generations an "ideal" image of Athens;² the city at the time of Pericles was a model society and such a speech would attest the ideal values, which contributed to the achievement of this position. This kind of interpretation seems also to lend support to the idea that the speech itself is much more the work of the author than of Pericles and was probably written after the end of the war.³ Less attention seems to have been paid by scholars to the historical facts that might have led Pericles himself to deliver a speech along these lines, the context in which it is placed, or the original audience at the Kerameikos. An historical contextualisation of this text might avoid misunderstandings and counter the tendency to pass a negative judgement on Thucydides' decision to present a funeral oration in

¹ The Funeral Oration in Thucydides has been the object of many and different interpretations. Some of them will be referred to in the course of our analysis. Aside from the classic commentaries in Hornblower (1991, 294-316) and Gomme (*HCT*, II. 94-144) I refer for a general introduction to the subject to L. Pearson (1943, 399-407), M.F. Pagliani (1964, 65-73) and P. Walcot (1973, 111-21), J.E. Ziolkowski (1981), and H. Flashar (1969).

² Compare, for example, what W. Jaeger (1946, 408) says: "The Funeral Speech, more than any other speech in Thucydides, is a free composition by the historian himself. It has been interpreted as Thucydides' own Epitaph on the past glories of Athens - rightly, inasmuch as death alone has the power to display the pure ideal of that which had passed away." See also Kakridis (1961). P. A. Stadter (1973, 109-23) notes that the fact that Plutarch in the *Life of Pericles* ignores the Funeral Oration reported by Thucydides might suggest that our speech was not considered authentic by him. However, C. M. J. Sicking (1995, 420-24) argues against Stadter's view.

³ This view seems to be shared by the majority of the commentators on the text; cf. P.A. Brunt (1993, 159 ff.), A. Momigliano (1930), N. Loraux (1986), P. Treves (1941), J. De Romilly (1963), T. Eide (1981), A. Flashar (1969), Kakridis (1961). Gomme (*HCT*, II. 130) argues that the arguments expressed seem to be more consistent with the atmosphere of the early stages of war than with its conclusion, but a clear position in favour of a date of composition near the beginning of the conflict seems to be clearly stated only by F.E. Adcock (1963), at least among the various comments I have been able to examine.

the second book, near the beginning of the war, when the losses sustained were as yet inconsiderable.⁴

My own analysis of the Funeral Oration is an attempt to understand how this speech might be appropriate within the historical context of the first year of the Peloponnesian War. Given that this speech conveys a particular image of Athens, one of my aims is to determine whether the words conveying that image can be viewed as an expression of Periclean policy at that time rather than as a product of Thucydides' own mind. This historical analysis will follow a study of the structure of the Funeral Oration considered in its relationship with the surviving examples of λόγοι ἐπιτάφιοι delivered in honour of war dead in fifth and fourth century Athens and with contemporary tragedy. I will try to verify to what extent our text parallels themes and rhetorical arrangements found in orally delivered epideictic speeches and tragedies; and, hence, whether it is possible to hypothesise that Pericles' encomium of the war dead, as presented by Thucydides, preserves some of the characteristics of oral presentation appropriate to the actual oration pronounced at the Kerameikos in 431 BC. At that time Thucydides was not yet in exile. Hence it is conceivable that he is reconstructing a speech he had actually heard or at least had first hand information about.⁵ However, when I speak of Pericles or his speech in this chapter, I mean, unless I indicate otherwise, the speaker and the speech as presented in the text of Thucydides.

⁴ Compare, for example, Dionysius of Halicarnassus *On Thuc.* 18.35: ὁ δὲ δὴ περιβόητος ἐπιτάφιος, ὃν ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ βύβλῳ διελέλυθε, κατὰ τίνα δὴ ποτε λογισμὸν ἐν τούτῳ κεῖται τῷ τόπῳ μᾶλλον ἢ οὐκ ἐν ἑτέρῳ; [...] ἐν ἣ βούλεται τις μᾶλλον βύβλῳ ἢ ἐν ταύτῃ τὸν ἐπιτάφιον ἡρμοττεν εἰρῆσθαι· ἐν ταύτῃ μὲν γὰρ οἱ κατὰ τὴν πρώτην τῶν Πελοποννησίων εἰσβολὴν πεσόντες Ἀθηναῖοι κοιμῶντι τινες ἦσαν ὀλίγοι, [...]. "And as for the much talked of funeral speech, which Thucydides recounted in the second book, for what reason, pray, is it placed in this book rather than in another? [...] any book that one might choose would be a more suitable place for the funeral oration than this book. For in this book, the Athenians who fell during the first invasion of the Peloponnesians were very few in number." (Translation from W.K.Pritchett (1975, 11-12)).

⁵ After this chapter had already been written, I had the chance to read a recent article published by A. B. Bosworth (2000, 1-16) on the interrelationship between the Funeral Oration in Thucydides and its historical context. Bosworth shows how the Funeral Speech might well be intended as Pericles' original speech more than as Thucydides' own reconstruction and it might be imagined as delivered during the first years of the war. I am glad to see that Bosworth agrees with some of the suggestions I offer in the second part of this chapter.

The frame of the speech

At chapter 34 the account of the public burial at the Kerameikos of the Athenians who had lost their lives during the first year of the Peloponnesian War is introduced. The new exposition is marked by an introductory clause similar to the ones we have already found in Herodotus and in Thucydides himself at the beginning of a new episode.

ἐν δὲ τῷ αὐτῷ χειμῶνι Ἀθηναῖοι τῷ πατρίῳ νόμῳ χρώμενοι δημοσίᾳ ταφὰς ἐποιήσαντο τῶν ἐν τῷδε τῷ πολέμῳ πρώτων ἀποθανόντων τρόπῳ τοιῷδε.

“In the course of the same winter the Athenians, following the custom of their fathers, celebrated at the public expense the funeral rites of the first who had fallen in this war. The ceremony is as follows.”(Thuc. II. 34.1)

The sentence introduces the new subject to the public. The temporal expression with δὲ in second position establishes a connection with the preceding account and parallels the technique used by Herodotus for linking together different λόγοι.⁶ Then τρόπῳ τοιῷδε, as in Herodotus, anticipates the following description of the proceedings.

A detailed account of the Athenians' way of honouring the war dead follows.⁷ The bones of the departed are kept in a tent for three days. Then, on the day of the funeral, coffins of cypress wood are borne on wagons, one for each tribe, while an empty bier is carried for those whose bodies could not be recovered. Anyone who wishes may attend the celebration and women make lamentations at the burial. The

⁶For further information on this subject see our discussion on the introduction of the Pausanias Excursus in Thucydides. Δὲ is not unusual at the beginning of a new exposition. Compare the beginning of Xenophon's *The Constitution of the Athenians* or his version of Socrates' *Apology*. For further discussion see Denniston (1934, 162 ff.).

⁷ There are different hypotheses on when the practice of delivering Funeral Orations for the war dead started. F. Jacoby (1944, 37-66) sets 465 BC as a possible date. J. E. Ziolkowsky (1981, 13-38) argues that the battle of Plataea (479 BC) should be considered as a *terminus post quem* for dating the beginning of the practice and A. Hauvette (1898) believes Cimon was responsible for the establishment of the ceremony, which would thus have been instituted around 475 BC. However, the *logos epitaphios* is only one of the Athenian ways of commemorating their dead: *θρήνοι*, epigrams and the epic lamentations for the departed are other common forms of commemoration practised on different occasions. See in particular F. Mauvet (1975, 33-44) for a study of the *θρήνοι* in the epic poems.

coffins are laid in the public sepulchre “which is situated in the most beautiful suburb of the city”, where all the people who died during the war are buried except for those who fell at Marathon.⁸ When the remains have been laid away in the earth, a man chosen by the state, delivers over them an appropriate eulogy. After this, the people depart. “In this manner they carry out the burial” (ὥδε μὲν θάπτουσιν, II, 34).

Thucydides does not usually devote so much space to giving detailed information about Athenian customs and, in general, the descriptive tone of the section seems Herodotean in character. Moreover, the kind of explanation given seems to indicate that this account was not specially addressed to an Athenian public.⁹ The detailed description of the practice of public burial would surely have been quite superfluous for Athenians, who were accustomed to such funerals, but might have interested an audience not familiar with this custom. The remark on the beauty of the place chosen as a sepulchre, which, as Hornblower has pointed out, is quite “unique” in Thucydides, might also have pleased people unfamiliar with it.¹⁰ The overall presentation sounds like the beginning of a Herodotean account suitable for performance in different parts of Greece.

After this introduction the speaker is presented to the public:

ἐπὶ δ' οὖν τοῖς πρώτοις τοῖσδε Περικλῆς ὁ Ξανθίππου ἡρέθη λέγειν. Καὶ ἐπειδὴ καιρὸς ἐλάμβανε, προελθὼν ἀπὸ τοῦ σήματος ἐπὶ βῆμα ὑψηλὸν πεποιημένον, ὅπως ἀκούοιτο ὡς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον τοῦ ὁμίλου, ἔλεγε τοιάδε.

“Now over these, the first victims of the war, Pericles son of Xanthippus was chosen to speak. And when the proper time came, he advanced from the sepulchre and took his stand upon a platform which had been built high in order that his voice might reach as far as possible in the throng, and spoke as follows:..” (Thuc. II 34.8)

Wiedemann has noted that: “the circumstantial information that Pericles ‘was standing on a high platform’ may indicate that such a speech really was given”.¹¹ Further evidence in support of this assertion comes from oratory. In the *De Corona*

⁸ Thucydides is often accused of a blunder here, because Marathon was not the only example of burial of Athenians on the battlefield. See Gomme (*HCT*, II 94 ff.) and Hornblower (1991, 294).

⁹ See Gomme (*HCT*, II 103), commenting on the use of the expression ὥδε μὲν θάπτουσιν at 34.7 writes: “a clear instance to show that Thucydides is writing for a Greek, not an exclusively or predominantly Athenian audience”.

¹⁰ Cf. S.Hornblower (1991, 294).

¹¹ Cf. T.Wiedemann (1985, 72).

Demosthenes uses a similar expression, *παρέρχομαι*, to indicate the movement of the speaker who comes forward and addresses the audience (Dem. *De Cor.*, 173, 285); at 285 *παρελθόντος σοῦ* is expressively referred to the orator who is going to deliver the funeral oration in honour of the soldiers who fell at the battle of Chaeroneia.¹² Similarly, Thucydides' way of presenting the speaker predisposes his audience to expect something capable of being delivered in public in the open air.

The speech presented by Thucydides as delivered on this occasion then occupies chapters 35 to 46. The account concludes at chapter 47 with a rounding-off sentence:

Τοιόσδε μὲν ὁ τάφος ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ χειμῶνι τούτῳ· καὶ διελθόντος αὐτοῦ πρῶτον ἔτος τοῦ πολέμου τούτου ἐτελεύτα.

“Such were the funeral ceremonies that took place during this winter, the close of which brought the first year of this war to an end.”(Thuc. II 47.1)

With the end of our account, the report of the events that occurred during the first year of war also reaches its conclusion. The year's ending formula sets a demarcation line between the account of the public burial of the Athenians and the following narrative.¹³

The speech as a funeral oration

In this section attention will be focused on those features that Pericles' speech, as presented by Thucydides, shares with other speeches composed for similar occasions. If the public *encomia* for the war dead are, as N.Loraux says, a “model of spoken language”¹⁴, parallels between this speech and other examples of the genre may yield

¹² Cf. also the expression *ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα ἀνέβην* used by Demosthenes to present the speaker (*De Cor.* 66, [247]). Similar expressions are used to introduce an orator who is going to deliver a speech in Plut. *Crassus* 12, *Cato Minor* 44, *Nicias* 8.3; Dionysius *A.R.* 8.58.

¹³ Cf. S.Hornblower (1987, 116) who compares the “simple and tranquil language” with which the Funeral Oration finishes off with the ending of the Homeric narrative on the funeral games in honour of Patroclus (*Iliad* XXIV.1).

¹⁴ Cf. N.Loraux (1986, 10).

some more elements pointing to the performability of the piece. Our evidence is restricted to four ἐπιτάφιοι λόγοι, all of them presumably composed after 431 BC: the speeches ascribed to Gorgias (421 BC), Lysias (392 BC), Demosthenes (338-7 BC) and Hyperides (322 BC).¹⁵ The earliest example, the speech attributed to Gorgias, is too fragmentary to let us see any overall structural parallels with Pericles' oration. However, it is relevant to our analysis because, among the different speeches preserved, it is the only one whose delivery can be considered to have been close to the time of Pericles' original speech. Many commentators have noted that the works of contemporary sophists influenced the style of Thucydides.¹⁶ This consideration applies to Thucydides' work generally, and it is confirmed in our case by the use of similar rhetorical figures employed respectively by Pericles and Gorgias in their funeral speeches.¹⁷ Moreover, antithetical constructions are widely employed in both texts.¹⁸ Pericles praises the ability to let rational thinking accompany action as Gorgias does (Thuc. II 40.3, Gorg. Frag.6. 358-9)¹⁹ and both speakers stress the opposition created between the mortal destiny of the fallen and the immortal fame achieved by

¹⁵ The date and authorship of these speeches is not always secure. M.Untersteiner (1961, 78) hypothesises that Gorgias' Funeral Oration was delivered after the Peace of Nicias (421 BC); likewise Blass (1887, v. 1, 61). Pohlenz (1913, 297, n.1) thinks of the period between 421 and 414 BC. Not all scholars agree in attributing to Lysias the speech preserved under his name. Discussion of the different ideas advanced is found in L.Gernet and M.Bizos (1924, 41-45). For the date of composition of this speech see L.Gernet and M.Bizos (1924, 43) and W.R.M.Lamb (1930, 29). As evidence for dating the speech of Demosthenes at the 338-7 BC N.W.DeWitt and N.J.DeWitt (1949, 4) and R.Clavand (1974, 11) accept the passage in *De Corona* (285) in which the author says that he was chosen to pronounce the eulogy over those who fell at Chaeronea in 338. Our speech would then correspond to this occasion. For the date of Hyperides' speech see G.Colin (1946, 273). Funeral orations are also included in Plato's *Menexenus* and Euripides' *Supplikes*, but these two speeches are not occasioned or delivered in the context of specific historical events; they are literary examples of the genre. Both will be referred to later on in this chapter.

¹⁶ See A. Parry (1989, 177-94) and for the sophistic character of the funeral oration T.Eide (1981, 33-45).

¹⁷ The surviving fragment of Gorgias' Funeral Oration is cited by Dionysius the Elder in his book *On Characters* (V. II) in reference to Gorgias' use of rhetorical figures. Cf. the use in both texts of *parisosis* (Gorgias 359, 362, 370 ff., 373 ff., 361 ff. and Thuc. II 40.1, 40.2, 40.3, 42.4) and *homoeoteleuton* (Gorgias 364, 373 ff. and Thuc. II 40.1, 40.3, 44.1).

¹⁸ Cf. Gorgias 353, 361 ff., 372 ff. and Thuc. II 37.2; 39.1, 40 1,2,4; 42.4; 43 2, 5; 44.2,3,4. The preference shown by Thucydides for antithetical arrangements is well known; here antithesis is often associated with *variatio* and this association makes the sentence-structure more complicated. L.Edmunds (1975, 44-70) hypothesises that in this case the arrangement might also be related to the paradoxes Thucydides finds in the speech.

¹⁹ Chapter 40 has attracted the interest of many scholars. For an analysis of the meaning in the context of φιλοκαλοῦμεν and φιλοσοφοῦμεν see in particular A.E. Wardman (1959, 38-42) and J.R. Rusten (1986). M. Hutton (1910, 11-17) observes a parallel between Thuc. II 40.4 and Arist. *Nic.Ethic* IX 7.

them through their actions (Thuc. II 43. 2; Gor. Fr.6. 372 ff.).²⁰ Another point of interest is that among the few such orations preserved, only Gorgias' and Pericles' examples contain a wish for the speech not to be subject to mortal φθόνος (Thuc. II 35.2; Gor. Fr. 6. 352).²¹

The frequent use of antitheses complicated by the use of *variatio* and various rhetorical figures has led some commentators to argue that Pericles' speech is written in a very difficult Greek²², but we should not forget that the effect of the speech must have been different when it was read aloud. We might also remember that many of the same devices were common in the texts of Attic orators. One of the characteristics of Pericles' speech is the wide range of *hyperbata*, which the text displays.²³ But this is comparable, for example, with its frequency in Attic orators. Longinus admires Demosthenes' use of this figure:

ὁ δὲ Δημοσθένης [...] πάντων δ' ἐν τῷ γένει τούτῳ κατακορέστατος καὶ πολὺ τὸ ἀγωνιστικὸν ἐκ τοῦ ὑπερβιβάζειν καὶ ἔτι νῆ Δία τὸ ἐξ ὑπογύου λέγειν συνεμφαίνων καὶ πρὸς τούτοις εἰς τὸν κίνδυνον τῶν μακρῶν ὑπερβατῶν τοὺς ἀκούοντας συνεπισπώμενος· πολλάκις γὰρ τὸν νοῦν ὃν ὥρμησεν εἰπεῖν ἀνακρεμάσας καὶ μεταξύ πως εἰς ἀλλόφυλον καὶ ἀπειοικυῖαν τάξιν ἄλλ' ἐπ' ἄλλοις διὰ μέσου καὶ ἔξωθεν ποθεν ἐπεισκυκλῶν εἰς φόβον ἐμβάλων τὸν ἀκροατὴν ὥς ἐπὶ παντελεῖ τοῦ λόγου διαπτώσει καὶ συναποκινδυνεύειν ὑπ' ἀγωνίας τῷ λέγοντι συναναγκάσας, εἶτα παραλόγως διὰ μακροῦ τὸ πάλαι ζητούμενον εὐκαίρως ἐπὶ τέλει που προσapoδούς, αὐτῷ τῷ κατὰ τὰς ὑπερβάσεις παραβόλῳ καὶ ἀκροσφαλεῖ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐκπλήττει.

“[Demosthenes] not only employs inversions to give a great effect of vehemence, and also, if you please, of improvisation, but even drags his audience along with him to share the peril of his long inversions. For he often hangs up the sense which he has begun to express, and meanwhile manages to wheel on to the empty stage one extraneous idea after another in a strange and unlikely order, making the audience terrified for the total collapse of the sentence and compelling them from sheer excitement to share the speaker's risks: then unexpectedly, after a great interval, the long lost phrase turns up pat at the end, so that he astounds them all the more by the mere reckless audacity of his inversions.” (*On the Subl.* 22, 3-4)²⁴

²⁰ For an interpretation of the word κάκωσις in Thuc. II 43 see B.R.Rees (1962, 369-76).

²¹ The motifs of φθόνος and ζῆλος in other funeral orations appear only in relation to the valour of the dead as subject to the envy of the living, not to the speech of praise itself: cf. Hyp. 32, Dem. 33, Lys. 26, 69, 79, 81.

²² Cf. P.J.Rhodes (1988, 227).

²³ For the *hyperbata* in Pericles' Funeral Oration cf. II 36.1, 36.4, 37.1, 37.3, 39.1, 39.2, 39.4, etc.

²⁴ Text and translation from W.H.Fyfe (1927, 194-96).

Here it is clear that Longinus appreciates the effect that the use of *hyperbata* creates in the text when performed. Interestingly enough, in the previous paragraphs the ancient critic speaks about the use of *hyperbata* in Herodotus and Thucydides (*On the Subl.* c.22, 2-3) without any suggestion that these were here intended for the appreciation of a silent reader. It is natural to infer that Longinus did not see any reason to distinguish between the use of this figure in an orator, like Demosthenes and historians, assuming perhaps, that a performance was implied in both cases.²⁵

The rhythm also favours oral delivery. Clear evidence is provided, for example, by the fact that Homeric and Archaic Lyric poetry are among the first testimonials of oral culture in ancient Greece. However, rhythms were not employed exclusively by poets, but were also occasionally exploited by prose writers.²⁶ Pericles' Funeral Oration seems to provide evidence for the use of some rhythmical modulation. In his treatise *On Literary Composition*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus devotes chapter 18 to a discussion of the effect of various rhythms, claiming that διὰ μὲν τῶν γενναίων καὶ ἀξιοματικῶν καὶ μέγεθος ἔχόντων ῥυθμῶν ἀξιοματική γίνεται σύνθεσις καὶ γενναία καὶ μεγαλοπρεπής, "it is through rhythms which are noble and dignified, and contain an element of greatness, that composition becomes dignified, noble and splendid" (18.10ff.). In order to demonstrate his point Dionysius offers various examples of noble style in prose and the first passage to be analysed is the beginning of Pericles' Funeral Oration in Thucydides (Thuc., II. 35ff.). The composition here is "impressive" (μεγαλοπρεπῶς) because the clauses are composed in impressive rhythms. τρεῖς μὲν γὰρ οἱ τοῦ πρώτου προηγούμενοι κῶλου σπονδεῖοι πόδες εἰσίν, ὁ δὲ τέταρτος ἀνάπαιστος, ὁ δὲ μετὰ τοῦτον αὖθις σπονδεῖος, ἔπειτα κρητικός, ἅπαντας ἀξιοματικοί. καὶ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον κῶλον διὰ ταῦτ' ἐστὶ σεμνόν· "For the three feet which usher in the first clause are spondees, the fourth is an anapaest, the next a spondee once more, then a cretic, all stately feet.

²⁵ *Hyperbata* were also common in poetry: see Pindar *Olympian* 12 v.3 ff. and *Nemean* 6, v.3 ff. Cf. also *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* c.30 and Plato *Protag.* 343 E.

²⁶ In a recent study B. Hemmerdinger (1981, 171f.) has argued that the language of Herodotus still retains poetical elements, such as the presence of dactylic, anapaestic and spondaic verses. According to him the beginning of the *History of the Persian Wars* is a hexameter and it was popular enough to be imitated by Sallust at the beginning of the *Bellum Iugurthinum* (5.1). The adoption of the rhythm would help the performance of parts of Herodotus' *Histories* in front of a large audience, a natural assumption when we consider that Greeks were used to listen to orally performed poetry more than to prose.

Hence the dignity of the first clause” (*On Lit. Com.*, 18). Similar metrical elements are found in the second and the third clauses of the speech and reasonably lead us to think that “[Thucydides] deserves his reputation for loftiness and beauty of language, since he habitually introduces noble rhythms” (ὥστ’ εἰκότως ὑψηλὸς εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ καλλιεπὴς ὡς εὐγενεῖς ἐπάγων ῥυθμούς. (*On Lit. Comp.*, 18).²⁷ Dionysius then arrives at similar results from an analysis of the beginning of the Funeral Speech in Plato’s *Menexenus* and from Demosthenes’ *De Corona*. All three examples of noble style cited by Dionysius come from prose compositions, one of them by Demosthenes, the orator *par excellence*. Dionysius’ judgement seems to indicate that he regarded all three texts as speeches actually performed, or suitable for oral performance. This is highly significant. While we know that Demosthenes was a practising orator, the funeral oration included in the *Menexenus* is a literary example of the genre and, as for Pericles’ encomium in Book Two, there is no certainty on how close the speech presented by Thucydides is to the one actually delivered in 431 BC. Moreover, even if we choose to disregard Dionysius’ judgement, are we to suppose that both Plato and Thucydides inserted metrical effects at the beginning of their speeches merely for the use of a silent reader? It seems more natural to conclude that these rhythms were intended to facilitate or enhance the performance of the speeches. They are there because they were originally part of a performance. It is interesting that the examples cited by Dionysius from Plato and Thucydides are both drawn from funeral speeches. Were poetical rhythms a standard feature of public *encomia* to begin with? A positive answer seems possible when we consider that, on the occasion of the public burial, the orator needed to attract the attention of a large audience gathered at the Kerameikos and to be intelligible to them. Nevertheless, our evidence of ἐπιτάφιοι λόγοι is too fragmentary to draw any certain conclusion on this matter.²⁸ With regard to our original search for evidence in favour of the performability of Pericles’ speech, further comparison with the few complete examples of funeral speeches should now be introduced. In the first instance, it seems useful to verify which of the arguments used by Pericles also occur in the later

²⁷ Translations from Dionysius *On Literary Composition* are from W. R. Roberts (1910, 177).

²⁸ Note also that the syntax for some of the openings of the speeches is very clear: οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ...Thuc. II 34, ἔργω μὲν ἡμῖν οἶδε ἔχουσι...Plato, *Men.* 236 D. The audience is clearly given to understand that this is the beginning of a speech. If we remember that Pericles is speaking from a raised position we should imagine an orator who loudly and clearly pronounced this opening so that his voice could be heard as far as possible and capture and command the crowd’s attention.

examples of the genre and which ones may rather be considered as peculiar to this speech. One rhetorical feature proper to the beginning of a discourse is the fear expressed by the speaker that the speech may prove unworthy of the exploits of those who are to be praised (Thuc. II 35, Hyp. Col.1) or be judged as inferior in comparison with earlier orations delivered on similar occasions (Thuc. 35.1, Lys. 190.2).

Praise of the ancestors follows as a constant feature (Thuc. 36.1, Lys. 190.3, Dem. 1389.3). This theme is often accompanied by a claim of Athenian autochthony (Thuc. 36.1, Lys. 192.17, Dem. 1390.1, Hyp. c. 4), an essential factor in the Athenians' ability to win that power, which was achieved by their ancestors and was bequeathed by them to the present generation (Thuc. 36.1, Dem. 1390.1). Because the Funeral Oration is above all a product of democratic Athens, as Loraux has argued in her illuminating book on the subject, praise of democracy is another obligatory theme.²⁹ Athens is *the* democratic city (Thuc. 37.1, Lys. 192.18, Dem. 1396.25), self-sufficient (Thuc.36.3, Dem. 1390.5), champion of the oppressed (Thuc. 39, Hyp.c.7) and the place where freedom of speech and equality before the law are fundamental elements of society (παρρησία Thuc. 37.1, Dem. 1397, ἰσηγορία Thuc. 37.1, Dem. 1397.28). Praise of Athenian παιδεία and ἐπιτήδευμα becomes such a common motif in these orations that Hyperides explicitly omits this theme, on the ground that their importance is already known to everyone (Thuc. 36.4, Dem. 1397.27; contrast Hyp.4).

Every Funeral Encomium necessarily includes words in praise of the dead: their courage and strength are worthy of praise as well as their spirit of sacrifice for the common good (Thuc. 39-40, Lys. 192.193, Dem. 1394, Hyp. C. 7). They died for their country, thus winning immortal fame among men (Thuc. 40, Dem. 1399.32, Hyp. C. 9 and also Thuc. 45 and Hyp. 13,42, Gor. 373 ff.).³⁰ The final part of the encomium is usually occupied by consolation offered to the parents of the dead (Thuc. 44, Lys. 197.70, Dem. 1400.35-36, Hyp. C.10), assurances that the city will take on

²⁹ Cf. N. Loraux (1986, 56 ff.).

³⁰ Because the orator intends to celebrate the valour shown by all the members of the community who died in defence of their own land, praise of individuals does not normally figure in these speeches. With the end of the fifth century, however, this attitude progressively changes and in Hyperides' Funeral Speech a large space has been devoted to the praise of a single man, Leosthenes, the general who had been among the fallen. For a further discussion on this subject, compare Loraux (1986, 111-112). Loraux also refers to J.Girard (1874, 216), who believes that individual praise included in a public encomium is a sign "of a profound modification of democracy" because it indicates a change in "the essential character of a genre that it had created for its own satisfaction".

the responsibility of bringing up their orphans (Thuc. 45, Lys. 197.75) and an injunction that the valour shown by these men must be emulated by other citizens (Thuc. 45, Hyp. C. 11). The speech may conclude with a call to the audience to depart (Thuc. 46.2, Dem. 1400.37). One difference between Pericles' Funeral Oration and these other speeches is that praise of Athens in the *History* exceeds the space normally devoted to the theme.³¹ Moreover, the traditional motif of the victory over the Persians and the mythological background of Athens, which are amply developed by the later speakers, are only briefly and allusively mentioned by Pericles. We shall see later on what may have caused these differences.

However, in general this comparison indicates that there are similarities both in structure and in content between Funeral Orations delivered at different times. A framework seems to be outlined within which each orator emphasises certain particular motifs among some basic features or omits others where he chooses. The speech delivered by Pericles in Thucydides follows this pattern. This means that the themes and structure of this oration are not unrelated to other examples of the genre that were actually delivered.

Up to this point our analysis has avoided any comparison between Thucydides' speech and the Funeral Oration in Plato's *Menexenus*.³² The *Menexenus* is a short Platonic dialogue composed around 386 BC.³³ Menexenus meets Socrates in the *agora*. He is returning from the Council Chamber where the Council has had to choose the orator to speak at the public funerals. Socrates admits to listening to these speeches with fascination: καὶ ἑκάστοτε ἔστηκα ἀκροώμενος καὶ κηλούμενος, ἡγούμενος ἐν τῷ παραχρήμα μείζων καὶ γενναιότερος καὶ

³¹ See also Rhodes (1988, 218) and his comment that the space given in this funeral oration to the praise of Athens is "abnormal".

³² Among the numerous studies on the *Menexenus* see in particular P.M. Huby (1957, 104-14), M.M.Henderson (1975, 25-46), N.Loroux (1974, 172-211). A.Croiset (1903, 59-63) detected interesting similarities between the Funeral Oration in the *Menexenus* and Isocrates' *Panegyricus*, G.Lattanzi (1935, 355-60) believes it is also possible to hypothesise a link with Lysias' Funeral Oration.

³³ L. Meridier (1949, 77) notes that the authenticity of *Menexenus* is confirmed by Aristotle *Rhet.* I 1367 b. Meridier also points out (p. 82) that it cannot be earlier than 387 BC, as mention is made of the Peace of Antalcidas, nor much later, as there is no mention of any later events. He therefore suggests 386 BC as a possible date of composition. A. Croiset (1903, 59) also accepts the Platonic authorship of the dialogue. J.E.Ziolkowski (1981, 25 ff.), M.Huby (1957, 107), H.M.Henderson (1975, 46), C.H.Kahn (1963, 229) all accept 386 BC as a possible date of composition.

καλλίων γεγονέναι “and every time I listen fascinated, I am exalted and imagine myself to have become all at once taller and nobler and more handsome.” [...] τέως δὲ οἶμαι μόνον οὐκ ἐν μακάρων νήσοις οἰκεῖν· οὕτως ἡμῖν οἱ ῥήτορες δεξιοί εἰσιν “I almost imagine myself to be living in the Islands of the Blessed - so expert are our orators.”(2.235.c). Menexenus spots the polemical undertone of these words and accuses Socrates of always deriding the orators (3. 235.c). Socrates replies that these speeches are ready made and that eulogising the Athenians in front of Athenians is not a difficult task, so that it is easy to win credit as a fine speaker on such occasions (3.236.d). When Menexenus challenges him to demonstrate the power of a funeral oration himself, Socrates offers to deliver a speech composed for the forthcoming occasion by Aspasia. The oration, Socrates adds, is only in part extemporaneous; most of it is made of sections previously prepared: ὅτε συνετίθει τὸν ἐπιτάφιον λόγον, ὃν Περικλῆς εἶπε “at the time when she was composing the Funeral Oration that Pericles delivered”(4.236.b). Socrates thus appears to assume that the orator who is chosen to deliver a funeral speech draws the subject matter from a set of traditional topics. Moreover, these suitable topics are found in a funeral oration pronounced by Pericles. There were in fact two occasions on which it was Pericles who delivered such a speech. Besides the speech pronounced in the 431 BC, he also delivered the one over those who died in the Samian War in 440-439 BC.³⁴ While we do not know for certain whether Plato is imitating either one of those speeches, it is reasonable to explore the possibility of links with Pericles’ speech of 431 BC, at least in the form in which it is presented by Thucydides.³⁵ Apart from the similar use of rhythms, already noted, a comparative study of these two texts, in fact, seems to reveal clear and significant similarities. Not only does the speech reported by Socrates in the *Menexenus* touch upon themes present in Thucydides, but, in addition, the order in which these motifs are placed in the text appears to be almost the same.

At the opening of the speech in Thucydides, Pericles introduces the opposition between λόγος and ἔργα. The speech which has to be delivered by the orator (λόγος), is in fact related to the actions of the men who are to be praised and the

³⁴ Cf. P.J.Rhodes (1988, 217). Evidence for the Samian speech pronounced by Pericles comes from Plutarch, *Per.* 8.9 and 28.5; Aristotle *Rhet.* I 7.1365 a 31-33 and III 10.1411 a 1-4.

³⁵ Cf. also P.J.Rhodes (1988, 219) who argues that the speech in Plato’s *Menexenus* is a parody of the one in Thucydides.

ceremonial burial of the dead, both part of the ἔργα. This is accompanied by the statement that this funeral encomium is being delivered in accordance with the law (νόμος) and the wishes of the city.

Thuc II 35.1

Οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε ἤδη εἰρηκότων ἐπαινοῦσι τὸν προσθέντα τῷ νόμῳ τὸν λόγον τόνδε, ὡς καλὸν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐκ τῶν πολέμων θαπτομένοις ἀγορεύεσθαι αὐτόν. ἔμοι δὲ ἄρκουν ἂν ἐδόκει εἶναι ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔργῳ γενομένων ἔργῳ καὶ δηλοῦσθαι τὰς τιμάς. οἷα καὶ νῦν περὶ τὸν τάφον τόνδε δημοσίᾳ παρασκευασθέντα ὁρᾶτε, καὶ μὴ ἐν ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ πολλῶν ἀρετὰς κινδυνεύεσθαι εὖ τε καὶ χεῖρον εἰπόντι πιστευθῆναι.

“Most of those who have spoken here in the past have commended the law-giver who added this oration to our ceremony, feeling that it is meet and right that it should be spoken at their burial over those who have fallen in war. To me, however, it would have seemed sufficient, when men have proved themselves brave by valiant acts, by act also to make manifest the honours we render them, such honours as today you have witnessed in connection with these funeral ceremonies solemnised by the state, and not that the valour of many men should be hazarded on one man to be believed or not according as he spoke well or ill.”

All these motifs are recalled by Socrates in his *exordium*.

Plato, *Men.* 236 D

ἔργῳ μὲν ἡμῖν οἶδε ἔχουσι τὰ προσήκοντα σφίσιν αὐτοῖς, ὧν τυχόντες πορεύονται τὴν εἰμαρμένην πορείαν, προπεμφθέντες κοινῇ μὲν ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως, ἰδίᾳ δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκείων· λόγῳ δὲ δὴ τὸν λειπόμενον κόσμον ὃ τε νόμος προστάττει ἀποδοῦναι τοῖς ἀνδράσι καὶ χρή· ἔργων γὰρ εὖ πραχθέντων λόγῳ καλῶς ῥηθέντι μνήμη καὶ κόσμος τοῖς πράξασι γίγνεται παρὰ τῶν ἀκουσάντων.

“In respect of deeds, these men have received at our hands what is due unto them, endowed wherewith they travel their predestined road; for they have been escorted forth in solemn procession publicly by the City and privately by their kinsfolk. But in respect of words, the honour that remains still due to these heroes the law enjoins us, and it is right, to pay in full. For it is by means of speech finely spoken that deeds nobly done gain for their doers from the hearers the meed of memory and renown.”³⁶

³⁶ Translations from the *Menexenus* are from R.G.Bury (1929).

After the preamble, Pericles expresses the desire not to be subject to φθόνος for the praise he is going to make. Such an appeal is not present in Plato.³⁷ The intention to speak about the ancestors follows in both texts and in both cases it is accompanied by reference to the autochthonous character of the Athenians.

Thuc II 36

ἄρξομαι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν προγόνων πρῶτον· δίκαιον γὰρ αὐτοῖς καὶ πρέπον δὲ ἅμα ἐν τῷ τοιῷδε τὴν τιμὴν ταύτην τῆς μνήμης δίδοσθαι. Τὴν γὰρ χώραν οἱ αὐτοὶ αἰεὶ οἰκοῦντες...

“ I shall speak first of our ancestors, for it is right and at the same time fitting, on an occasion like this, to give them this place of honour in recalling what they did. For this land of ours, in which the same people have never ceased to dwell”

Plato, *Men.* 237 B c. 6

Τῆς δ' εὐγενείας πρῶτον ὑπῆρξε τοῖσδε ἡ τῶν προγόνων γένεσις οὐκ ἔπηλυσ οὔσα, οὐδὲ τοὺς ἐκγόνους τούτους ἀποφηνάμενη μετοικοῦντας ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ ἄλλοθεν σφῶν ἡκόντων, ἀλλ' αὐτόχθονας καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἐν πατρίδι οἰκοῦντας καὶ ζῶντας...

“ Now as regards nobility of birth, their first claim thereto is this, that the forefathers of these men were not of immigrant stock, nor were these their sons declared by their origin to be strangers in the land sprung from immigrants, but natives sprung from the soil living and dwelling in their own true fatherland...”

While Pericles says that the Athenians' ancestors are worthy of praise (Thuc. 36.2 ἐκεῖνοι...ἄξιοι ἐπαίνου) Plato transfers such praise directly to the land that raised their forefathers (Plato *Men.* 237.7 ἄξια ἡ χώρα...ἐπαινεῖσθαι). In Plato this land is said to possess a suitable supply of nourishment for its offspring (Plato *Men.* 237. E μόνη γὰρ ἐν τῷ τότε καὶ πρώτη τροφὴν ἀνθρωπεῖαν ἤνεγκε...), while in Thucydides, Athens became αὐταρκεστάτη thanks to its naval expansion (Thuc. II 36.3). Moreover, in II 38. 2 it is said that: “Athens is so great that all the products of all the earth flow in upon us, and ours is the happy lot to gather in the good fruits of our own soil with no more home-felt security of enjoyment than we do those of other lands” (ἐπεσέρχεται δὲ διὰ μέγεθος τῆς πόλεως ἐκ πάσης γῆς τὰ πάντα, καὶ ξυμβαίνει ἡμῖν μηδὲν οἰκειότερα τῇ ἀπολαύσει τὰ

³⁷ The motif of φθόνος and ζήλος are mentioned in the *Menexenus* (242 A), but not as regards the speech, but the jealousy and envy shown against Athens after the Persian Wars.

αὐτοῦ ἀγαθὰ γιγνόμενα καρποῦσθαι ἢ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων). We have seen that the praise for the land is a traditional topic in the Funeral Orations preserved, but because of the special circumstances created by the Peloponnesian invasion of Attica, Athens was particularly dependent on food imported from abroad. Pericles is thus adapting a traditional motif to the necessities imposed by the actual situation and this presupposes that his audience was itself a part of that historical context.

Mention of the education the Athenians' ancestors had had and of their πολιτεία similarly follows in both texts (Thuc. II 36. 4, Plato *Men.* 238 B). Such a state is a democratic government, where ἰσονομία and ἰσογονία may be equally celebrated.

Thuc. II 37.1

Καὶ ὄνομα μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ὀλίγους ἀλλ' ἐς πλείονας οἰκεῖν δημοκρατία κέκληται· μέτεστι δὲ κατὰ μὲν τοὺς νόμους πρὸς τὰ ἴδια διάφορα πᾶσι τὸ ἴσον, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀξίωσιν, ὥς ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ εὐδοκίμῳ, οὐκ ἀπὸ μέρους τὸ πλεον ἐς τὰ κοινὰ ἢ ἀπ' ἀρετῆς προτιμᾶται, οὐδ' αὖ κατὰ πενίαν, ἔχων γέ τι ἀγαθὸν δρᾶσαι τὴν πόλιν, ἀξιώματος ἀφανεία κεκώλυται. Ἐλευθέρως...

"It is true that our government is called a democracy, because its administration is in the hands, not of the few, but of the many; yet while as regards the law all men are on an equality for the settlement of their private disputes, as regards the value set on them it is as each man is in any way distinguished that he is preferred to public honours, not because he belongs to a particular class, but because of personal merits; nor, again, on the ground of poverty is a man barred from public career by obscurity of rank if he but has it in him to do the state a service. Liberal...."

Plato *Men.* 238 D-E

Καλεῖ δὲ ὁ μὲν αὐτὴν δημοκρατίαν, ὁ δὲ ἄλλο, ὃ ἂν χαίρη· ἔστι δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μετ' εὐδοξίας πλήθους ἀριστοκρατία. βασιλεῖς μὲν γὰρ αἰεὶ ἡμῖν εἰσὶν· οὗτοι δὲ τοτὲ μὲν ἐκ γένους, τοτὲ δὲ αἵρετοί· ἐγκρατὲς δὲ τῆς πόλεως τὰ πολλὰ τὸ πλῆθος, τὰς δὲ ἀρχὰς δίδωσι καὶ κράτος τοῖς αἰεὶ δόξασιν ἀρίστοις εἶναι, καὶ οὔτε ἀσθενεία οὔτε πενία οὔτ' ἀγνωσία πατέρων ἀπελήλαται οὐδεὶς οὐδὲ τοῖς ἐναντίοις τετίμηται [...] ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι, μιᾶς μητρὸς πάντες ἀδελφοὶ φύντες, οὐκ ἀξιούμεν δοῦλοι οὐδὲ δεσπόται ἀλλήλων εἶναι, ἀλλ' ἡ ἰσογονία ἡμᾶς ἢ κατὰ φύσιν ἰσονομίαν ἀναγκάζει ζητεῖν κατὰ νόμον,...

“One man calls it ‘democracy’, another man, according to his fancy, gives it some other name; but it is, in very truth, an ‘aristocracy’ backed by popular approbation. Kings we always have; but these are at one time hereditary, at another selected by vote. And while the most part of civic affairs are in control of the populace, they hand over the post of government and the power to those who from time to time are deemed to be the best men; and no man is debarred by his weakness or poverty or by the obscurity of his parentage, or promoted because of the opposite qualities, [...] we and our people on the contrary, being all born of one mother, claim to be neither the slaves of one another nor the masters; rather does our natural birth equality drive us to seek lawfully legal equality, ...”

A similar opposition between public and private is also presented here, but with the difference that, in Plato, this concept is applied to the behaviour of the citizens during the Persian Wars, while in Thucydides it is applied to the obedience to the laws (Thuc II 37. 2 τὰ ἴδια ...τὰ δημόσια / Plato *Men.* 239.B ἴδια καὶ δημοσία).

At this point Socrates begins a lengthy excursus on the valour shown by the Athenians during military campaigns. Pericles, however, in accordance with the opening of his speech in Thucydides, omits to speak of such matters. When attention returns to the dead, the parallel structure of the speeches comes out again. As well as the traditional motif of praise for men who preferred to die nobly rather than to live ignobly (Thuc. 42.4, Plato *Men.* 246. D. 19), the consolation for the relatives is also expressed in similar words.³⁸ The parents of the men who lost their lives must endure their misfortune (Thuc.44.1 παραμυθήσομαι Plato, *Men.* 247. 20 παραμυθεῖσθαι) as cheerfully as possible and not join in lamentations (Thuc. 44.1 οὐκ ὀλοφύρομαι, Plato, *Men.* 247.20 μὴ ξυνοδύρεσθαι). The city will undertake the duty of raising the children of the fallen (Thuc. II 46.1, Plato, *Men.* 249).

Both speeches end with a reference to the customary rites of burial performed by the city, a theme that we have already found at the beginning of the speech (Thuc. II 46.1, Plato, *Men.* 249).

Some of these motifs are also found in other funeral orations, as we have noted, but these other surviving examples do not reveal such a consistency in the disposition of similar ideas as in the Platonic and Thucydidean texts. In their case, the parallel seems to go far beyond similar but independent developments of conventional topics.

³⁸ On chapter 42 see also J.S.Rusten (1986, 49-76), L.Edmunds (1975b, 217-25), and J.H.Oliver (1951, 327-30).

The main parts of the two speeches correspond, with parallel themes being included and being presented in a similar order of exposition.³⁹ It is true that there are differences: we have noted that the concern to avoid φθόνος present in Thucydides both at the beginning of the oration and at the end is missing in Plato. Moreover, these two speeches devote a different degree of attention to the subjects of the Persian Wars and the Athenian πολιτεία. However, that divergence might be connected with the historical backgrounds of the two works and their different artistic aims, as we will see later on in this chapter. External evidence in favour of a connection between Menexenus' and Pericles' Funeral Orations might also be found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus. In his *Demosthenes* (23) Dionysius proposes to analyse a Platonic dialogue, but not one of those which "never saw even the threshold of a law court or an open assembly" (23). His choice is the *Menexenus*, in which Socrates reports a complete funeral speech, ὡς μὲν ἔμοι δοκεῖ, Θουκυδίδην παραμιμούμενος, "taking Thucydides as his model, in my opinion"(23).

Many commentators say that Socrates' speech in the *Menexenus* must be considered as a rhetorical exercise conforming to the rules of the genre.⁴⁰ But, in spite of its fictitious nature, this composition is judged by Hermogenes as one of the best panegyrics ever composed (Herm. *Περὶ Ἰδεῶν* 403). According to Cicero this speech had become very popular and "it was delivered every year" at the customary public ceremony in honour of those fallen in battle.⁴¹ This means that the oration was

³⁹ *Contra* M.M.Henderson (1975, 29), who argues that there is "a vast difference in content" between these two orations; G.M.Lattanzi (1935, 355-60) suggests a parallel between the Funeral Oration in the *Menexenus* and Lysias' Funeral Oration. C.H.Kahn (1963, 232), however, seems to favour the idea of a parallel between Plato's *Menexenus* and Pericles' speech in Thucydides. He notes that the antithesis between λόγος and ἔργα and the reference to παιδεία and πολιτεία is present in both speeches. As for the reason why Plato should have chosen to echo Thucydides' speech Kahn advances an interesting hypothesis: "In 386 BC, when the publication of Thucydides' work was perhaps an event of the recent past, the *History* in general and the Funeral oration in particular would immediately be recognised by Plato for what they are: the most effective possible presentation of a view of the Periclean empire directly opposed to his own. Plato is not interested in parodying the Thucydidean oration but in answering it. He would certainly have realised that a work of this magnitude cannot be undermined by caricature, and in any case the question was too weighty to be treated by simple mockery. He had stated his own view of fifth century Athens negatively and at great length in the *Gorgias*. In the *Menexenus* he sets out to do it more briefly and in positive fashion: by praising Athens as she should be praised" (p.224). Cf. also L.Meridier (1949, 80).

⁴⁰ Meridier (1949, 66) notes that the speech of Socrates is a pastiche of the traditional epitaphios.

⁴¹ Cicero *Orator*, 44.151. Cicero notes that in his Funeral Oration, which became so popular, Plato made a large use of *hiatus*. As regards this passage from the *Orator* P.M.Huby (1957, 107) comments

actually performed on various occasions and with success before an audience. If the similarities we have found between the *Menexenus* and Pericles' speech in the *History*, lead us to conclude that Plato had Thucydides as his model when composing this speech, we could also argue that Pericles' speech must therefore have many of the characteristics proper to orally delivered *encomia*. This conclusion parallels the one drawn by the comparison between Pericles' speech and the other surviving examples of the genre, as we discussed above.

The Funeral Oration in its context

Let us suppose for a moment that the speech presented by Thucydides reflects the one actually delivered by Pericles in 431 BC and was written at a time close to the original occasion. Does the literature of that time give us any clue as to whether the structure of the oration and the themes chosen for inclusion are consistent with the cultural atmosphere of Athens in the first years of the Peloponnesian War rather than with its end? We have already considered the *sophistic* elements in the speech. I therefore turn now to a comparison with the tragic poets.

Among Euripides' plays the *Suppliants* and the remains of the *Erectheus* show some similarities with the funeral oration in Thucydides.⁴² We do not know the precise date of composition of the *Suppliants*, but most critics seem to agree on 424 BC as a *terminus post quem*. The situation of the play appears to be inspired by the events following the battle of Delium and the refusal of the Thebans to give back the Athenian dead.⁴³ The play itself contains a funeral oration in the form of a speech delivered by Adrastus on the warriors who died fighting before the seven gates of Thebes (vv.857-917).⁴⁴ But it is the *ἀγών* between Theseus and the Theban herald

that the beginning of the custom could be as early as the fourth century when the *Menexenus* was written.

⁴² For the similarities between Euripides and Thucydides see in particular J. De Romilly (1984) and (1963, 130-140), N.Loraux (1986, 192), J.Finley (1967, 1-54), C.W. Macleod (1983, 140-58).

⁴³ For the nature of this play and its date of composition see: D.J. Conacher (1967), L.G.H.Greenwood (1953), E.Delebecque (1951), G.Zuntz (1955). For a different view see G.Norwood (1954), who believes that the play has been interpolated and sections of it have been written several generations later.

⁴⁴ For other aspects linked to funeral rites in the play see M.D.Mirto (1984, 55-88).

(vv.381-584) that is particularly interesting. There are two main points of dispute: the difference between tyranny and democracy and the value to be ascribed to Panhellenic laws, in this case that concerning the burial of the dead. Theseus replies to criticism levelled against democratic government by the Herald who defends the institutions under a tyranny. The king attributes three main characteristics to democracy: Athens is a free *polis*, in which the citizens are able to participate in the administration in rotation and where poor and rich share the same rights thanks to equality under the law.

Supp. 403 ff. (Theseus):

Πρῶτον μὲν ἤρξω τοῦ λόγου ψευδῶς, ξένε,
ζητῶν τύραννον ἐνθάδ'· οὐ γὰρ ἄρχεται
ἐνὸς πρὸς ἄνδρος, ἀλλ' ἐλευθέρα πόλις.
δῆμος δ' ἀνάσσει διαδοχαῖσιν ἐν μέρει
ἐνιαυσίασιν, οὐχὶ τῷ πλούτῳ διδοὺς
τὸ πλεῖστον, ἀλλὰ χῶ πένης ἔχων ἴσον.

“To begin with, stranger, you started your speech on a false note by asking for the master here. The city is not ruled by a single man but is free. The people rule, and offices are held by yearly turns: they do not assign the highest honours to the rich, but the poor man also has an equal share”.

Supp. 429 ff. (Theseus):

Οὐδὲν τυράννου δυσμενέστερον πόλει,
ὅπου τὸ μὲν πρῶτιστον οὐκ εἰσὶν νόμοι
κοινοί, κρατεῖ δ' εἷς τὸν νόμον κεκτημένος
αὐτὸς παρ' αὐτῷ· καὶ τόδ' οὐκέτ' ἔστ' ἴσον.
γεγραμμένων δὲ τῶν νόμων ὁ τ' ἀσθενὴς
ὁ πλούσιός τε τὴν δίκην ἴσην ἔχει,
[ἔστιν δ' ἐνισπεῖν τοῖσιν ἀσθενεστέροις
τὸν εὐτυχοῦντα ταῦθ', ὅταν κλύῃ κακῶς,]
νικᾷ δ' ὁ μείων τὸν μέγαν δίκαι' ἔχων.
τοῦλεύθερον δ' ἔκεῖνο.

“There is nothing more hostile to a city than a tyrant. In the first place, there are no common laws in such a city, and one man, keeping the law in his own hands, holds sway. This is unjust. When the laws are written, both the powerless and the rich have equal access to justice, (and it is possible for the weaker man to address the same

words to the fortunate man whenever he is badly spoken of), and the little man, if he has right on his side, defeats the big man. Freedom consists in this.”⁴⁵

These concepts have a close link with Pericles’ words in the Funeral Oration. Not only does Pericles cover the same topics in his speech, as many scholars have already pointed out, but also the basic concepts of νόμος, ἰσονομία, ἐλευθερία, and the fixed-term exercise of power awarded by lot to citizens of Athens belonging to different classes are closely associated in both texts.

Thuc. II 37

Χρώμεθα γὰρ πολιτεία οὐ ζηλούσῃ τοὺς τῶν πέλας νόμους, παράδειγμα δὲ μᾶλλον αὐτοῖ ὄντες τισὶν ἢ μιμούμενοι ἑτέρους. Καὶ ὄνομα μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ὀλίγους ἀλλ’ ἐς πλείονας οἰκεῖν δημοκρατία κέκληται· μέτεστι δὲ κατὰ μὲν τοὺς νόμους πρὸς τὰ ἴδια διάφορα πᾶσι τὸ ἴσον, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀξίωσιν, ὥς ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ εὐδοκιμεῖ, οὐκ ἀπὸ μέρους τὸ πλεον ἐς τὰ κοινὰ ἢ ἀπ’ ἀρετῆς προτιμᾶται, οὐδ’ αὖ κατὰ πενίαν, ἔχων γέ τι ἀγαθὸν δρᾶσαι τὴν πόλιν, ἀξιώματος ἀφανεία κεκώλυται. Ἐλευθέρως δὲ ...

It might be objected that these elements are naturally mentioned because they are what make up a democratic government, but the way they are combined in both these short passages seems at least worthy of attention. Moreover, Theseus’ speech is intended to counter the position in defence of tyranny taken up by his opponent. The same contrast seems to be intended in the Funeral Oration between the Athenian πολιτεία and other kinds of government, as we will see later on.⁴⁶

The second part of the dispute in the *Suppliants* is formally concerned with the right to bury the dead, but in fact, the discussion deals mainly with the question of whether it is right or wrong to lead any city into a war. It is an act of ὕβρις, the Theban herald urges Theseus, to prefer war to peace; men should rather enjoy their children and their possessions avoiding the ἐλπίς ἀπιστος of a mad enterprise (vv.479 ff.). The praise that Pericles gives to the men who died in war reads like a counterblast to such a view. He asserts that they preferred to risk their own lives for

⁴⁵ Texts and translations from Euripides’ *Suppliants* are from D.Kovacs (1998).

⁴⁶ See also Loraux (1986, 192). An alternative view is expressed by J.H.Oliver (1951, 327-30), who considers that Pericles’ intention was to praise the government of Athens as a form of mixed constitution.

the common good, rather than rest content in the enjoyment of their present possessions, and they entrusted themselves to an ἀφανῆς ἐλπίς (Thuc. II 42.4). They did exactly what the Theban herald in the *Suppliants* would dissuade people from doing. And this is made the very reason why they deserve praise: they followed, the κοινὴ ἐλπίς in defence of their land (Thuc. II. 43). In similar vein, *mutatis mutandis*, Theseus counters the Theban's contention. In this case war is said to be legitimised when it is fought for something valued throughout the whole of Greece (πάσης Ἑλλάδος κοινὸν τόδε, v.538), and the duty to uphold a νόμος Πανελλήνων (v.526) overrides the value of individual lives.

Euripides' play was composed during the Peloponnesian War and the exchange between Theseus and the Herald can be seen as designed to strengthen the resolve of disheartened Athenians by appealing to ideal values on which the greatness of Athens was supposed to rest.⁴⁷ We know that around the time when the *Suppliants* was performed, the war had already caused so much distress among the Athenians that many of them would have preferred to end hostilities. Aristophanes' criticism of the demos for missing good opportunities of reaching a peace goes back as far as 425 BC with the *Acharnians*. Even though it is always difficult to extract historical information from the work of a comic poet, we can be sure that these motifs were representative of thoughts shared by many of the audience at that time. At the end of what was only the first year of war, when Pericles delivered his actual speech, the situation must have been different, but, as we will see later on, there were, even at that period, various causes of discontent among the Athenians. It was thus when the war was in progress that the appeal to defend the ideal values, on which the Athenian greatness rested, was called for. The emphasis given to the role of Athens and the excellence of her πολιτεία finds its complete motivation and justification when placed in this political setting.

If we accept that the words pronounced by Pericles in Thucydides strike a very similar note to those in Euripides' play, why need we follow the

⁴⁷ Cf. also J. Finley (1967, 37). Some similarity might also be drawn between the defence of democratic institution in Pericles' Funeral Oration and Euripides' *Erechtheus* frag. 362 (esp. vv. 7-8 and 16-17). Giles (1890, 95-8) draws parallels between some of the tragic characters and contemporary historical figures. A contrary view is expressed by J. W. Fitton (1961, 430-61). Other considerations are also found in L. H. G. Greenwood (1953, 92 ff.) and G. Zuntz (1955, 5).

numerous scholars who suppose that the Funeral Oration was only composed after the war was over?⁴⁸ Is it not more natural to consider the praise of Athens as an image that the politician wanted to impress upon his audience in order to steel them to endure the sufferings entailed in the war? Alongside the similarities we have noted between this speech and the other funeral orations, one difference is the space devoted to Athens and her constitution. That degree of emphasis would be justified if these words were inspired by the atmosphere of the Peloponnesian War.

We now have to explain why such an appeal was needed so soon after the beginning of the conflict. Boosting the Athenians' morale at the end of the first year by way of stressing the greatness of Athens might be viewed as not yet necessary and justified. But were the Athenians unanimously in favour of persevering with hostilities? We know from Thucydides that the decision to go to war itself was not favoured by all in Athens. The speech that Pericles is made to deliver from I 139 ff., proves that his pro-war campaign was needed to defeat the view of many who were against that policy. According to Grote, the Athenians were not brought to the resolution of starting a war "without much reluctance, and great fear of the consequences, especially destruction of property in Attica".⁴⁹ Precisely this fear was fulfilled, as destruction of land was one of the first consequences of the conflict. Cogan seems to be right when he says that:

"Though later the routine invasions of Attica would be received routinely, this first invasion and the sudden loss of these possessions were taken badly in Athens, especially by those whose farms and homes were destroyed. [...] In it [the Funeral Oration] Pericles constructed a vision of Athens that existed quite apart from any specific possessions, and to whose defence he could appeal in the face of any material losses."⁵⁰

That the loss of their land had a great impact on the population is repeatedly stressed in Thucydides. In his speech in Book Two Archidamus forecasts that the devastation of Attic territory will lead the Athenians to act impulsively precisely because they are not used to these invasions (Thuc. II 11). Thucydides underlines the uneasiness felt in consequence of these attacks: people who had been used to living in the country were

⁴⁸ The parallel with the *Suppliants* weakens the case for a date of composition of the Thucydidean speech later than 404 BC, which is advocated, for example, by N. Loraux (1986, 121 ff.) and J. De Romilly (1963, 130-40).

⁴⁹ Cf. G. Grote, (1907, 147).

⁵⁰ M. Cogan (1981, 40).

forced not only to leave their belongings, but also to take refuge inside the walls of the city.⁵¹

Χαλεπῶς δὲ αὐτοῖς διὰ τὸ αἰεὶ εἰωθέναι τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς διαιτᾶσθαι ἢ ἀνάστασις ἐγίγνετο –

“And the removal was a hard thing to accept, because most of them had always been used to living in the country” (Thuc. II 14.2).

οὐ βραδίως τὰς μεταναστάσεις ἐποιοῦντο [...] ἐβαρύνοντο δὲ καὶ χαλεπῶς ἔφερον οἰκίας τε καταλείποντες καὶ ἱερὰ ἃ διὰ παντὸς ἦν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῆς κατὰ τὸ ἀρχαῖον πολιτείας πάτρια δίκαιτάν τε μέλλοντες μεταβάλλειν καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ πόλιν τὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπολείπων ἕκαστος.

“and so they did not find it easy to move away [...] they were dejected and aggrieved at having to leave their homes and the temples which had always been theirs, relics, inherited from their fathers, of their original form of government, and at the prospect of changing their mode of life, and facing what was nothing less for each of them than forsaking his own town” (Thuc. II 16.2).

At the time, Pericles must have been blamed for these privations. His decision not to intervene at that stage was part of his defensive strategy, but this strategy cannot have been favoured by all Athenians. Many would probably have preferred to face the enemy instead of being forced to stay inside Athens and allow their own land to be destroyed.⁵² The open discontent of the population is again witnessed by the words of Thucydides: τὸν Περικλέα ἐν ὀργῇ εἶχον “They were indignant at Pericles.” (Thuc. II, 21.3.)

It is worth noting that, after this, Thucydides says that Pericles avoided calling an assembly: he was afraid that the citizens would be led by anger (ὀργῇ) and not by thoughtful consideration (γνώμη) and would make mistakes (Thuc. II 22.1). Such a decision shows how difficult the situation was, especially for the man who had advocated the war. In Thucydides’ text some minor military events follow and then, at chapter 34, the account of the Funeral Speech at the Kerameikos begins.

⁵¹ Cf. also D.Kagan (1974, 43ff.).

⁵² For the defensive strategy advocated by Pericles at the beginning of the war see M.Cogan (1981, 39), G.E.De Ste. Croix (1972, 203), and Kagan (1974, 66).

I wonder whether it would be possible to suppose that, given the animosity of the people in Athens, Pericles actually avoided at some point making a public speech at the assembly and chose instead the customary annual gathering for the public funeral to pronounce an oration where the praise for the dead was accompanied by words directed to the present audience, with a view to defending his policy and strengthening their endurance. One consideration that is normally omitted in discussions of this speech is that these same men and women, who had been forced to leave their houses and gather inside Athens and whose emergency accommodation within the city was soon to contribute to the spread of the plague, must have formed a significant part of the audience of the Funeral Oration actually delivered. The insistence on the greatness of Athens may have sounded ironic to some of them, but the intention of the speaker was probably to remind them of the country for which they were enduring such sufferings. The space given to this theme thus seems to have the function of strengthening the Athenians' spirits, as in a *paraenesis* before a battle.⁵³

In line with this interpretation I will attempt to give an explanation for certain other peculiarities of this speech. I have already pointed out that at the beginning Pericles attempts to guard against φθόνος. People are normally envious when somebody praises someone else for noble deeds:

“For the hearer who is cognisant of the facts and partial to the dead will perhaps think that scant justice has been done in comparison with his own wishes and his own knowledge, while he who is not so informed, whenever he hears of an exploit which goes beyond his own capacity, will be led by envy (διὰ φθόνον) to think there is some exaggeration. And indeed eulogies of other men are tolerable only in so far as each hearer thinks that he too has the ability to perform any of the exploits of which he hears; but whatever goes beyond that, at once excites envy (φθονοῦντες) and disbelief” (Thuc. II 35.3).

As a theme of *exordium* the averting of φθόνος is found in many public speeches, but among the Funeral Speeches preserved it is found only in the concluding fragment of Gorgias' speech. It seems to me that its inclusion of this theme in Thucydides' *History* fulfils a particular need. One of the basic concepts singled out by Loraux in

⁵³ It is worth noting that according to H.R.Rawlings III (1981, 129) there is a parallel between the second and the seventh book of Thucydides. According to this theory the Funeral Oration pronounced by Pericles would correspond to a military *paraenesis*, namely, the speech of Nicias to his troops before the battle in the harbour of Syracuse at VII 61-64, together with his final exhortations at 69.2.

her book on the Funeral Orations in Athens is that such a speech is closely related to the democratic institutions: the praise is for the Athenians who died in battle, not for the valour of the individual; such anonymity is connected with the egalitarian spirit of the *polis*. Moreover, precisely because the speech is a celebration of Athenian valour, its nature does not share many features with the *θρήνοι* for the dead; it functions much more like an epinician ode.⁵⁴

It seems important to me to examine the relationship between the funeral encomium in Thucydides and the epinician odes. Motifs like the appeal to avoid envy that we find in this funeral speech could, for example, be related to this poetic genre. It is precisely in the epinicia of Pindar or Bacchylides that envy is mentioned as a dangerous attitude.⁵⁵ *Φθόνος* undermines the praise of the champion whose victory the poet is about to celebrate: it diminishes the value of the song. Pindar says: ὄψον δὲ λόγοι φθονεροῖσιν, ἄπτεται δ' ἐσλῶν αἰεὶ, χειρόνεσσι δ' οὐκ ἐρίζει “Words sharpen the appetite of envy which clings always to the noble, and struggles not against the base.” (N. 8. 21-2) The wish to avoid such envy at the beginning of epinicia has the function of protecting the praise itself.

But what is its function in a Funeral Oration? The objects of this praise are dead men. It is possible for the living to try to achieve an equal share of fame, as Pericles says (II 45.1 τὸ ἀντίπαλον), but such praise cannot detract from their glory: their destiny has already found its fulfilment, while the *φθόνος* normally had the effect of causing a change of fortune for its living victim.⁵⁶ It seems to me that such an appeal is much more appropriate for the greatness of Athens which the orator is going to celebrate than for the praise of the dead.⁵⁷ Or, to be more explicit, the damage that envy could cause to the praise of the warriors would damage the very city whose glory they had defended at the cost of their own lives. Bowra in his analysis of a passage of *P.* 11. 29-30, where Pindar speaks of the envy caused by Clytemnestra's wealth, notes that such a remark is made in a very general way:

“But his (Pindar's) audience is free to apply it to existing circumstances and to see that Athens, in all her power and delight in it, is unaware of the forces gathering in

⁵⁴ Cf. N.Loraux (1986, 49 ff.).

⁵⁵ For the theme of *φθόνος* in Pindar see in particular *Ol.* VIII 55, *Pyth.* I 85, *Pyth.* VII 19, *Pyth.* I 29, *Isth.* VI 39, *Isth.* V 24.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Hdt.* I 32 ff. and III 41 ff.

⁵⁷ Cf. the alternative view of H.Flashar (1969, 14 f.) who argues that it is envy against the speech itself as a piece of public oratory.

secret against her. The universal character of Pindar's myths, and his skill at embodying it in a dramatic form, make it difficult at times to decide whether he directs his message to an individual or a city."⁵⁸

It seems to me that a similar interpretation could be applied to this point of the Funeral Oration. It is the greatness of Athens, expressed through praise, that exceeds the necessity imposed by the genre and probably even by the occasion, that may be subject to envy: the envy provoked by such an ideal picture in those who did not share the same patriotic feelings advocated by the orator, envy for the greatness of Athens itself.

It should be noted that what Pericles says about his city at chapter 41 might be regarded as reflecting a hybristic attitude:

Μετὰ μεγάλων δὲ σημείων καὶ οὐ δὴ τοι ἀμάρτυρόν γε τὴν δύναμιν παρασχόμενοι τοῖς τε νῦν καὶ τοῖς ἔπειτα θαυμασθησόμεθα, καὶ οὐδὲν προσδεόμενοι οὔτε Ομήρου ἐπαινέτου οὔτε ὅστις ἔπεσι μὲν τὸ αὐτίκα τέρψει, τῶν δ' ἔργων τὴν ὑπόνοιαν ἢ ἀλήθεια βλάψει, ἀλλὰ πᾶσαν μὲν θάλασσαν καὶ γῆν ἐσβατόν τῇ ἡμετέρα τόλμῃ καταναγκάσαντες γενέσθαι, πανταχοῦ δὲ μνημεῖα κακῶν τε καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἀίδια ξυγκατοικίσαντες.

"Many are the proofs which we have given of our power and assuredly it does not lack witnesses, and therefore we shall be the wonder not only of the men of today but of after times; we shall need no Homer to sing our praise nor any other poet whose verses may perhaps delight for the moment but whose presentation of the facts will be discredited by the truth. Nay, we have compelled every sea and every land to grant access to our daring, and have everywhere planted everlasting memorials both of evils to foes and of good to friends". (Thuc. II. 41)

The insistence on the glory of Athens here is extreme: with its great and far reaching positive and negative powers, the city seems to have the power of a god.⁵⁹

If we are facing an example of ὕβρις, the wish to avoid φθόνος is even more justified. Such an attitude implies going beyond the limits imposed on human beings and for this reason is one of the favoured targets for envy.⁶⁰ There seems to be a correspondence between these verses and *Isthmian* IV vv. 37 noted, among the

⁵⁸ C.M.Bowra (1964, 269). Bowra's interpretation is, of course, just one among many. For a survey of the various readings of Pindar's text see D.C. Young (1968, 1-26, esp. 6-9).

⁵⁹ For the positive and negative power exercised by gods see J.G.Howie (1989, 51-76, esp. 55ff.).

⁶⁰ See C.M.Bowra (1964, 187), but also Aesch. *Pers.* V. 821 ff. and Hdt. I 32, III 41.

various commentators on Thucydides, only by Poppo, and not fully developed by him.⁶¹ *Isthmian* IV is an epinician delivered probably in 476 BC in celebration of the victory of the Theban Melissus in the pancratium. Pindar recalls the immortal glory conferred upon Ajax by the praise of Homer and hopes for the same effect with his song for Melissus:

ἀλλ' Ὀμηρός τοι τετίμακεν δι' ἀνθρώπων, ὅς αὐτοῦ
 πᾶσαν ὀρθώσας ἀρετὰν κατὰ ῥάβδον ἔφρασεν
 θεσπεσίων ἐπέων λοιποῖς ἀθύρειν.
 Τοῦτο γὰρ ἀθάνατον φωνᾶεν ἔρπει,
 εἴ τις εὖ εἶπη τι· καὶ παγ-
 καρπον ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ διὰ πόντον βέβακεν
 ἐργμάτων ἀκτὶς καλῶν ἄσβετος αἰεὶ.

“But Homer, to be sure, has made him honoured
 among mankind, who set straight
 his entire achievement and declared it with his staff
 of divine verses for future men to enjoy.
 For that thing goes forth with immortal voice
 if someone says it well, and over the all-fruitful
 earth and through the sea has gone
 the radiance of noble deeds forever undimmed”(vv. 37-43).⁶²

Pericles not only mentions the praise conferred by Homer, but also transfers the capacity to cross land and sea attributed in Pindar to the song, to Athens itself in a physical sense. He seems almost to reply to the poet's words: not even Homer would be adequate to celebrate the greatness of Athens: her greatness overwhelms that of the song of praise itself.

But is this the only possible comparison with Pindar? It appears to me that a reading of *Isthmian Four* reveals other possible points of contact with Thucydides. Four members of the Cleomynidae, whose family Pindar celebrates in that poem, died in battle; and praise of them is included in the ode:

ὅσσα δ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους ἄηται
 μαρτύρια φθιμένων ζώων τε φωτῶν
 ἀπλέτου δόξας, ἐπέψαυ-

⁶¹ See Poppo (1834, 204).

⁶² Text and translation from Pindar's *Odes* from W.H.Race (1997).

σαν κατὰ πᾶν τέλος· ἀνορέαις δ' ἐσχάταισιν
οἴκοθεν στάλαισιν ἄπτονθ' Ἡρακλείαις·
καὶ μηκέτι μακροτέραν σπεύδειν ἀρετάν.

“... and as for all the testimonials wafted among mankind
of endless fame won by men living or dead,
they have obtained them in all fullness,
and by their unexcelled manly deeds
have grasped from their home the pillars of Herakles;
let no one strive for yet more distant achievement.”(vv. 9-13)

They achieved fame for glorious deeds (φάμαν εὐκλέων ἔργων) and now the song will raise up their fame again. The poet will celebrate the victories obtained by the members of the family at the games.

οὐδὲ παναγυρίων ξυνᾶν ἀπεῖχον
καμπύλον δίφρον, Πανελλά-
νεσσι δ' ἐριζόμενοι δαπάνᾳ χαῖρον ἵππων·
τῶν ἀπειράτων γὰρ ἄγνωτοι σιωπαί.
ἔστιν δ' ἀφάνεια τύχας καὶ μαρναμένων,
πρὶν τέλος ἄκρον ἰκέσθαι

“Nor did they hold back their curved chariot
from national festivals, but competing with all Hellenes
they rejoiced to spend wealth on horses,
since to those who do not take part belongs oblivious silence.
But even when men strive, fortune remains hidden
before they reach the final goal ...” (vv. 29-32)

Praise, it is implied, follows for them now, as it did for Ajax in Homer's epic. There is to be praise for Melissus, too, for his courage, in which he is compared to Heracles. Pindar proceeds further and tells how Heracles explored land and sea, and made seafaring safer. Thus what he has already said of praise of great deeds performed by epic heroes and patrons of later poets, that it ranges over land and sea (37 b ff.), he now transfers directly to the Theban hero's labours.

υἱὸς Ἀλκμήνας· ὅς Οὐλύμ-
πονδ' ἔβα, γαίης τε πάσας
καὶ βαθύκρημον πολιᾶς ἀλὸς ἐξευρῶν θέναρ,
ναυτιλίαισί τε πορθμὸν ἡμερώσας.

“[He was] Alkmene’s son, who went to Olympus,
after exploring all the lands
and the cliff-walled hollow of the grey sea,
and making safe the route for shipping.”(vv. 55 ff.)

Let us hypothesise for a moment that Pericles in Thucydides had this ode in mind while he was delivering his oration. In that case, over and above the relatively certain parallel of the lines on Homer, we could say that the words immediately preceding in chapter 41 are reminiscent of Pindar *Isth.* IV.9 ff. Moreover, the earlier phrase describing the achievements of the previous generation of the victor’s family, μαρτυρία in the same poem, is similar to the terms employed by Pericles referring to the proofs given by Athens of her power in Thucydides:

Μετὰ μεγάλων δὲ σημείων καὶ οὐ δὴ τοι ἀμάρτυρόν γε τὴν δύναμιν
παρασχόμενοι τοῖς τε νῦν καὶ τοῖς ἔπειτα θαυμασθησόμεθα

“Many are the proofs we have given of our power and assuredly it does not lack witnesses, and therefore we shall be the wonder not only of the men of today but of after times” (Thuc. II 41.4)

These dead, Pindar says, reached the τέλος ἄκρον (v.32) as well as in Thucydides the warriors passed away at the crowning moment of glory (ἄκμῃ τῆς δόξης, Thuc. II. 42.4).

Let us therefore try to fit Pericles’ boast of Athens’ extensive power on land and sea into this whole cultural context. We have seen that in Pindar the capacity to cover such a huge space is related both to the song of Homer and to the labours of Heracles. The image of covering land and sea in connection with Heracles is not rare: we find it again in *Nemean* I vv. 62 ff. where Tiresias prophesies that Heracles will slay all the lawless beasts on land and sea:

ὅσους μὲν ἐν χέρσῳ κτανών,
ὅσους δὲ πόντῳ θήρας αἰδροδίκας

“all the lawless beasts he would slay on land,
and all those in the sea”

Nemean III (vv.22-26) expresses the same idea and Heracles is also acclaimed as the hero who traced the limits for human expansion: beyond the space covered in his journeys further exploration is impossible: the way is ἄβατον (v. 22).⁶³ The same term occurs in association with Heracles in *Ol.* 3. 43. Heracles appears as the extreme example of great labours and great rewards. In spite of his incredible achievements, he did not commit an act of ὕβρις, and became the only human hero admitted among the gods.⁶⁴ All these elements generally recur in association with Heracles in Pindar and all of them are present in *Isthmian* IV. Moreover, the symmetrical structure of the ode, as it has been noted by some commentators, makes it possible to trace parallels between the different sections.⁶⁵ The power of praise will traverse land and sea like the hero in his labours; the poet will give immortality to the achievements of the man, comparable with the divine immortality enjoyed by the hero.⁶⁶ The song of praise, the valour of the man being celebrated, and the immortal value of both are closely associated in Pindar's ode.

Let us turn our attention to Thucydides again. We have already pointed out that the funeral oration is like a song of praise; it is the encomium for the dead and in that lies its affinity with the epinicia. Pericles himself speaks of his speech as an ἔπαινος (Thuc. II 35.2, 36.2 and 4) and εὐλογία (Thuc. II 42.1). Such praise has indeed an immortal value (ἀγήρων ἔπαινον, Thuc. II 43.2) as well as the glory of these dead will be unforgettable (ἀιείμνηστος, Thuc. II, 43.2).⁶⁷

⁶³ Here the limits of expansion are the pillars of Hercules (Straits of Gibraltar) seen as "famous witnesses" (μάρτυρας κλυτάς, *N.* III v.24) of Heracles' furthestmost voyage. Cf. Thucydides II 41.4 οὐ δὴ τοι ἀμάρτυρόν γε τὴν δύναμιν παρασχόμενοι referred to the power of Athens that does not lack witnesses.

⁶⁴ Cf. C.Carey (1981, 119).

⁶⁵ Cf. G.A.Privitera (1982, 53-59).

⁶⁶ The intention of conferring immortality on the person praised in a funeral oration seems a motif also noted by Plutarch in the speech delivered by Pericles for the men who died during the Samian War: "Again Stesimbrotos says that, in his funeral oration, over those who had fallen in the Samian War, he (Pericles) declared that they had become immortal, like the gods: 'the gods themselves - he said - we cannot see, but from the honours which they receive, and the blessings which they bestow, we conclude that they are immortal'. So it was, he said, with those who had given their lives for their country." (*Per.* VIII 6)

⁶⁷ In the Periclean speech in Thucydides the threnodic element is absent. The fact has been noted even by ancient critics. In an *Arts Rhetorica*, ascribed to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in the section *On the figurative expressions* (9) it is said: "Of the three main parts of funeral speeches: praise (epainos), lament (threnos) and consolation (paramythia) [Thucydides] omits the threnos. For lamentation would not contribute to advice (symbouleutic) or exhortation (protrope) as Thucydides himself says: 'Therefore I do not lament the parents who are present more than I exhort you'."

This means that the same connection *valour of certain men* = *song* = *immortality* that we found in Pindar, is also present in Pericles' speech. But we have already noted that in the Funeral Oration a special emphasis has been given to the praise of Athens: in this particular speech Pericles aims to exalt the city as well as the men who died for it; his speech is a ὕμνος in honour of Athens (ὁ γὰρ τὴν πόλιν ὕμνησα, Thuc. II 42.2). To complete the parallel with *Isthmian Four* we should say that the city itself will gain immortality for its achievement through the words of the speaker as it happens for the men. But Pericles rejects the equation *power of Athens* = *song* = *immortality*: the city, he says, in its greatness exceeds the immortal value that poets' words might confer. Athens does not need the praise of Homer; her own conquests on land and sea will sufficiently attest her glory. Pericles is actually saying that the city has already won immortality: Athens like Heracles will display her power as far as the limits proper to human beings allow, just as Heracles will cover all θάλασσαν καὶ γῆν ἐσβατόν (Thuc. II, 41.4) without committing an act of ὕβρις. The city seems actually to be assimilated to a divinity, probably Heracles, the only human hero who reached Olympus and who was regarded as a symbol of civilisation and *defender of the oppressed*.⁶⁸

Summing up the main topics covered in our analysis of the oration up to this point, we could say that Pericles' speech in Thucydides seems to satisfy the requirements of the genre as well as the situation. As a Funeral Oration it conforms to certain rules. At the same time, it appears to go beyond the common motifs when the speaker needs to cover particular themes whose inclusion is relevant to the historical situation much more than to the occasion. The result is that we have both a funeral encomium, and an epinician ode in praise of Athens.

I have argued that this form of εὐλογία has the appearance of being occasioned by its actual historical setting: the distress of the Athenian population at that time required these words as an encouragement. A further look at this historical context will help to clarify some other characteristics of this speech.

⁶⁸ It should be noted that the call to follow the example of those who risked their lives for their country contains an element of wisdom literature, a motif linked elsewhere to the *Epinician Odes*. Cf. Pindar *Pythian* I vv. 85 ff. and M.L. West (1978, 3-25). Thucydides' interrelationship with authors of wisdom literature will be studied later on in the course of our chapter on the Corcyrean stasis.

One element, which appears to be commonly underestimated is the appeal that Sparta herself and her policy might have had for some Athenians during these years. Such a consideration may appear totally out of place at first sight. The Lacaedaemonians were *the enemy*, Athens was defending her power fighting against Sparta. At first it was a fight undertaken in order to assert her own predominance and then became a struggle for survival. Nevertheless, there were indeed admirers of Sparta even in the Athens of the time.⁶⁹ Sparta was also a great power and its form of constitution actually helped to prevent the occurrence of internal strife, a feature that later on will be considered as one of the most damaging characteristics of the Athenian *politeia* (see especially Thucydides' account of the Corcyrean stasis in Book Three, 70-84).

The pamphlet known under the name of the *Athenian Constitution* and attributed to Ps.Xenophon, apparently written around ~~the~~ 430 BC, is clearly an expression of this view.⁷⁰ Without looking too far afield we might also remember the supposed charges made against Socrates as a Laconizer or the jokes in Aristophanes about the Athenians who used to dress and keep their hair in the Spartan fashion.⁷¹ While probably most of the Athenians simply regarded Sparta as the enemy, we should not underestimate the opposite tendency. After all, the oligarchic revolution of 411 BC should be related to a cultural atmosphere; men like Alcibiades could easily pass from one side to the other. Later on, the ideal state pictured by Plato in the *Laws* seems to have many points of contact with the constitution of Sparta.⁷²

I am not forgetting the many things said by Euripides against the Spartans and their character, but I wonder how much of these words should be understood not simply as statements of his own views, but much more as a counterblast to another school of thought within Athens. If there was disagreement on the image of Sparta it was useful to stress the point, to make clear that not Sparta but Athens represented the best form of government. Gomme has already pointed out that the praise of Athens in

⁶⁹ See A. Powell - D. Hodkinson (1994), E. Rawson (1969, 12-32) and L. Prandi (1976, 72-83).

⁷⁰ For a discussion of the possible date of composition of the *Athenian Constitution* see H. Frisch (1942, 47-62).

⁷¹ See Plato, *Prot.* 342 and D. Harvey (in A. Powell-D. Hodkinson, 1994, 35-59) who analyses the various references to Spartans in Aristophanes' plays. Although Aristophanes writes during the Peloponnesian War, Harvey notes the presence of jokes about people who sided with Sparta (the use of *lakedaimonizo* first appears in 426 in the *Babylonians*). One of the conclusions Harvey draws from his analysis is that Aristophanes himself: "even in wartime, was a good deal more sympathetic (towards Sparta), than has generally been suspected" (p. 53).

⁷² See A. Powell (1994, 273-323).

the Funeral Oration contains an implicit contrast with Sparta, but he seems to restrict that contrast to a small portion of the speech.⁷³ It is perfectly true that chapters 39 and 40 are explicitly devoted to stressing the difference between the Athenian way of life and that of Sparta, but the contrast seems to me to be implicit throughout most of Pericles' speech. In the circumstances of a war with Sparta the very emphasis on Athens inevitably has the effect of underlining the differences between the two states. The discourse begins with praise of the Athenian *politeia* as not imitating the laws of others but serving instead as an example to them. There is surely an allusion by contrast here to the tradition known to us from Herodotus (I. 65.4) that the Spartan Constitution had been copied by Lycurgus from the undoubtedly similar one in Crete:

Χρώμεθα γὰρ πολιτεία οὐ ζηλούσῃ τοὺς τῶν πέλας νόμους, παράδειγμα δὲ μᾶλλον αὐτοὶ ὄντες τισὶν ἢ μιμούμενοι ἑτέρους (Thuc. II 37.1)

After Sparta's defeat of Athens, more admirers may well have come forward. We might therefore ask whether the introductory words of the pro-Spartan pamphlet by Xenophon himself, the *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, written a good time after Athens' defeat, might be intended as an intentional rejoinder to Pericles' expression:

ἐκεῖνος γὰρ οὐ μιμησάμενος τὰς ἄλλας πόλεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐναντία γνοὺς ταῖς πλείσταις προέχουσαν εὐδαιμονίᾳ τὴν πατρίδα ἐπεδείξεν

"For it was not by imitating other states, but by devising a system utterly different from that of most others, that he (Lycurgus) made his country pre-eminently prosperous" (Xen. *Lac. Const.* I .2.)⁷⁴

We should not forget that the claim of superiority made by Athens was probably countered by similar claims by the opposite side. As at the beginning of every war, the battle was fought not only on the field, but also at an ideological level. The fact that some words of Pericles recall the speech of Archidamus in Book Two assumes a

⁷³ See Gomme (*HCT*, II. 117 ff.) who understands the parallel between Athens and Sparta as restricted to chapters 39-40, where the contrast is explicit (cf. also the mention of the Spartan practice of *ξενηλασία* in Aristoph. *Birds* v. 1012 and Plato *Leges* 12. 950 b, *Protag.* 342), but in my view the whole speech is intended to stress the difference between the two *politeiai*.

⁷⁴ Note that Gomme (*HCT*, II. 107) also refers to this passage from Xenophon in his comment at II 37.1, but he rejects the idea that Thucydides had any intention to refer to the story that Sparta borrowed its Constitution from Crete at this point of the speech. *Contra* E.C. Marchant (1927, 170).

considerable significance if considered from this perspective. Archidamus' words on the greatness of the Spartans' ancestors and his call to them not to be inferior to their fame recall Pericles' words in the Funeral Oration (ἡμῶν αὐτῶν τῆς δόξης ἐνδεέστερους, Thuc. II.11.2 (compare Thuc. II 36 ff.)). Likewise in both texts an appeal to be εὐψυχότατοι and ἀσφαλέστατοι is made (Thuc. II 11.5 and Thuc. II 39 ff.).

In Book One the emphasis given to the Lacaedaemonian *politeia* is also similar to the words of Pericles.

μόνοι γὰρ δι' αὐτὸ εὐπραγίαις τε οὐκ ἐξυβρίζομεν καὶ ξυμφοραῖς ἦσσαν ἐτέρων εἰκομεν [...] πολεμικοὶ τε καὶ εὐβουλοὶ διὰ τὸ εὐκοσμον γιγνόμεθα, τὸ μὲν ὅτι αἰδῶς σωφροσύνης πλεῖστον μετέχει, αἰσχύνης δὲ εὐψυχία, εὐβουλοὶ δὲ ἀμαθέστερον τῶν νόμων τῆς ὑπεροψίας παιδεύομενοι καὶ ξὺν χαλεπότητι σωφρονέστερον ἢ ὥστε αὐτῶν ἀνηκουστεῖν, καὶ μὴ, τὰ ἀχρεῖα ξυνετοὶ ἄγαν ὄντες, τὰς τῶν πολεμίων παρασκευὰς λόγῳ καλῶς μεμφόμενοι ...

"We" Archidamus says "alone do not become insolent in prosperity or succumb to adversity as much as others do [...]. Indeed, it is because our orderly temper that we are brave in war, because self-control is the chief element in self respect, and respect of self, in turn, is the chief element in courage and wise in counsel because we are educated too rudely to despise the rules and with too much severity of discipline to disobey them, and not to be so ultraclever in useless accomplishments as to disparage our enemy's military preparations in brave words ..." (Thuc. I, 84 3).⁷⁵

It is difficult to believe that the praise of Athens in the Funeral Speech in its context does not have the function of counteracting such Spartan propaganda. We too, Pericles seems to say, are able to show courage. Our system of education is different from that in Sparta, but we do not let ourselves be softened by our culture, and our conduct in war is no less courageous.

If we accept this line of interpretation we have another justification for the space devoted in the encomium to the praise of Athens: not only a theme suitable to raise the spirits, but also an answer to the adversary's claims to excellence. We have seen that in Euripides' *Suppliants* the opposition between democratic institutions and oligarchic ones is explicit: Theseus defends the value of democracy against the

⁷⁵ Gomme (*HCT*, II. 111 ff.) notes the parallel with Archidamus' speech, but does not point out any specific points of contact with Pericles' speech.

accusations made by the Theban herald. Such an ἄγών, we have said, seems to develop the contrast that is implicit in Thucydides. But if we accept a relationship between the two authors, why do many commentators say that the ἄγών in Euripides' play is anachronistic, precisely because of the fear expressed in relation to an oligarchic movement?⁷⁶

At that time, the fear of an oligarchic government in Athens may well not have been so great as towards the *end* of the war, but the discussion on the constitutions seems to take too deep a root in the atmosphere in Athens during those years of war to be ruled out as unimportant. Euripides' debate is indeed a defence of a policy and of a constitution, that of Athens, but this defence is being made in opposition to an opponent, Sparta. We should set Pericles' words in Thucydides and the ἄγών in Euripides' play in this context when accounting for their similarity.

The same consideration could also help us to explain why in *Menexenus* Plato does not insist on the praise of Athens. The oration Socrates is going to deliver is intended as a rhetorical exercise, not once set in a real historical occasion, and dwelling on such a theme would have been inappropriate. Moreover, Plato lives at a different point in history: the necessity of defending the policy of Athens against an adversary does not have the same importance for Plato, who seems rather to like some particular aspects of the Spartan way of life.⁷⁷ Although the *Menexenus* is set during the life time of Pericles, the actual date of composition must clearly have been well after Athens' defeat, and neither Plato's own attitude, nor the time when he wrote this work would have favoured emphasis on the greatness of Athens of the kind we find in Pericles' speech in Thucydides.

⁷⁶ Cf. for this position C.Collard (1972, 39-53) and L.G.H. Greenwood (1953, 112-3).

⁷⁷ Cf. Plato *Laws*. My interpretation of the text of Plato agrees with the judgement expressed by A. J. Toynbee (1934, 90-92) who interprets *Laws* 704-707c as an example of the repudiation of everything that had made Athens great. The passage seems "almost like a deliberate rejoinder, point for point, to the eulogy of Athens in Pericles' Funeral speech, as reported in Thucydides' Book II c. 35-46" (p.92,n.2). An opposite view is expressed by C.Macdonald (1959, 108-9).

CHAPTER THREE

The description of the plague in the *History* of the Peloponnesian War : Thucydides II 47-54

Throughout this exposition I have been trying to discuss whether inside the *History* of Thucydides as a whole, it is possible to identify self-contained sections, each one having a distinctive structure and character. In the present chapter I analyse the structure and the content of the Thucydidean description of the Plague that struck Athens in 430 BC, in an attempt to verify to what extent the account should be considered as a digression and what its relationship is with the work as a whole. Particular attention will be paid to the different influences that the text seems to reflect. Herodotean motifs and tragic features will be found to be framed inside a narrative section in which Thucydides seems to seek to rival authors of medical treatises in giving his own scientific account of an epidemic.

The structure of the narrative and the influence of Herodotus

The first question we should consider is to what extent Thucydides' description of the plague may be viewed as an autonomous piece of narrative. For it to be considered as such, this section might be required to fulfil two requirements. First, it should be possible to take it as a whole outside the context of the *History* of the war and still have a story perfectly understandable to a prospective public unacquainted with the overall narrative. Second, its structure should evidence a self-contained organization of thought. A further aspect worth examining is whether there are any features peculiar to this section that look as if they have been included in order to facilitate the understanding or raise the expectations of a potential audience.

The account of the plague follows the Funeral Oration delivered by Pericles in the second book of the *History*. The image of a powerful Athens outlined in the speech is

immediately followed by one of the most moving descriptions of misery in the whole of the work.

The plague comes completely unexpected when the account of the second year of war begins. The only previous reference to the event is at I.23 where the epidemic was numbered among the great disasters occurring during the Peloponnesian War. But I. 23 does not give the reader any information as to the time when this disease had struck Athens, and nothing in the Funeral Oration or the narrative surrounding it gives any hint of the impending calamity. Some commentators have argued that the description of the plague has been juxtaposed with Pericles' encomium of Athens precisely in order to create a dramatic contrast.¹ Yet that valuable insight into the literary effects of the juxtaposition does not invalidate the observation that the abruptness with which the picture of Athens devastated by the disease is introduced makes the whole description stand out from the overall context. Moreover, the plague is a non-military event neither planned nor foreseen by the belligerents. Its inclusion within the history of a war is justified by the fact that its occurrence will dramatically affect the resources available to the two sides at this early stage of the conflict. However, precisely because the story of an infectious disease is not a military event in itself, a briefer reference to it would probably not have impaired the understanding of the war itself. Thus, though some mention of the plague might reasonably have been expected, the same cannot be said for the space Thucydides devotes to a detailed description of the symptoms and of the moral effects it had among the population of Athens.² The large space devoted to the account of a non-military event and the abruptness with which the story comes, prompt me to examine the narrative from chapter 47 to 54 and to look for any evidence that this section could be considered as a self-contained account framed in a particular structure.

Overall, the account of the plague seems to be divided into three separate sections: the description of the physical symptoms of the disease (II. 49-50), the

¹ Cf. J.F. Finley (1947, 150) and P.J. Rhodes (1988, 228).

² S. Hornblower (1991, 316) argues that the space given to the account is "wholly unexpected" and Rhodes (1988, 233) says that: "it is remarkable that Thucydides, whose criteria of relevance are for most of the time so narrow, should have included this detailed account of the plague in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*."

unusual complaints suffered (II. 51-52) and, finally, the moral degeneration caused by the spread of the epidemic (II 53). These parts are preceded by an introduction to the subject at chapters 47-48 and followed by a conclusion at chapter 54. Both introduction and conclusion present the author speaking in the first person to the public. A close examination of these different parts will reveal their structure.

At the beginning of the summer of 430 BC the Peloponnesians invaded Attica under the command of Archidamus :

Καὶ ὄντων αὐτῶν οὐ πολλάς πω ἡμέρας ἐν τῇ Ἀττικῇ ἡ νόσος πρῶτον ἤρξατο γενέσθαι τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις, λεγόμενον μὲν καὶ πρότερον πολλαχόσε ἐγκατασκῆψαι καὶ περὶ Λῆμνον καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις χωρίοις, οὐ μέντοι τοσοῦτός γε λοιμὸς οὐδὲ φθορὰ οὕτως ἀνθρώπων οὐδαμοῦ ἐμνημονεύετο γενέσθαι. Οὔτε γὰρ ἰατροὶ ἤρκουν τὸ πρῶτον θεραπεύοντες ἀγνοίᾳ, ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ μάλιστα ἐθνησκον ὅσῳ καὶ μάλιστα προσῆσαν, οὔτε ἄλλη ἀνθρωπεΐα τέχνη οὐδεμία· ὅσα τε πρὸς ἱεροῖς ἰκέτευσαν ἢ μαντείοις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐχρήσαντο, πάντα ἀνωφελῆ ἦν, τελευτῶντές τε αὐτῶν ἀπέστησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ νικώμενοι.

“Before they had been many days in Attica the plague began for the first time to show itself among the Athenians. It is said, indeed, to have broken out before in many places, both in Lemnos and elsewhere, though no pestilence of such extent nor any scourge so destructive of human lives is on record anywhere. For neither were physicians able to cope with the disease, since they at first had to treat it without knowing its nature, the mortality among them being greatest because they were most exposed to it, nor did any other human art avail. And the supplication made at sanctuaries, or appeals to oracles and the like, were all futile, and at last men desisted from them, overcome by the calamity.” (Thuc. II 47.3)

With these words Thucydides *presents* the subject to the public, *emphasises* its importance and *sums up* what will be the content of the following exposition. In fact, the next chapter will take up again the theme of the origin of the disease and Thucydides will speak all through chapters 49 and 50 about the high mortality caused by the infection. Chapter 51 will centre on the inability of the doctors to cure the sick with its consequences and chapter 52 will deal with the contempt for religion and law, to which the opening reference to the abandonment of appeals at temples should be linked. In the last part of the account, at chapter 54, the historian will explain why the enquiries at the oracles made by his contemporaries can be said to be “futile”. As a

presentation and at the same time a summary of the exposition to follow, these lines are structured as a perfect *introduction*.

A new extended explanation of the origin of the disease follows. ἤρξατο δὲ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον, ὡς λέγεται, ἐξ Αἰθιοπίας τῆς ὑπὲρ Αἰγύπτου... “The disease began it is said, in Ethiopia beyond Egypt ...”(Thuc. II 48.1). As we see, Thucydides has introduced this subject using an expression analogous to the one already employed at the beginning of the preceding chapter when referring to the origin of the epidemic: ἡ νόσος πρῶτον ἤρξατο γενέσθαι τοῖς Αθηναίοις, λεγόμενον μὲν καὶ πρότερον..., Thuc. II 47.3. It is arguable that such a repetition had the function of recalling the attention of the public back to the first point touched upon in the introduction. The second argument, the story of the disease, should follow and in fact in the subsequent lines Thucydides declares how he is going to describe the epidemic. This is a signal that the author will cover the various topics following the order of exposition presented in the introductory chapter 47.

The story of the disease begins at chapter 49:

Τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἔτος, ὡς ὁμολογεῖτο ἐκ πάντων μάλιστα δὴ ἐκεῖνο ἄνοσον ἐς τὰς ἄλλας ἀσθενείας ἐτύγχανεν ὄν· εἰ δέ τις καὶ προύκαμνέ τι, ἐς τοῦτο πάντα ἀπεκρίθη...

“That year, as was agreed by all, happened to be unusually free from disease so far as regards the other maladies; but if anyone was already ill of any disease all terminated in this ...”(Thuc. II 49.1)

The initially healthy conditions prevailing in the year in which the plague occurs contrast with the unhealthy conditions that will follow; these lines set the dramatic atmosphere which will characterise the whole of the following exposition. At the same time as introducing the account of the disease to his public, Thucydides needs to create the basis for an audience's agreement. He therefore invites the public to trust his own account. Using the expression ὡς ὁμολογεῖτο ἐκ πάντων the historian adds credibility to his own words specifying that other people shared his view. As a call for consensus the expression is often found in Herodotus.³

³ Herodotus employs the verb ὁμολογέω on many occasions when clarifying whether there is or there is not agreement among his sources. At I 5.2, I 17.1, VI 52.1 the verb indicates people who do not

The description that follows is centred on the various symptoms experienced by human beings and how the plague also affected animals. A summary clause marks the end of this narrative section and gives us further information on how the author intended to deal with the subject:

Τὸ μὲν οὖν νόσημα, πολλὰ καὶ ἄλλα παραλιπόντι ἀτοπίας, ὥς ἐκάστῳ ἐτύγχανέ τι διαφερόντως ἑτέρῳ πρὸς ἕτερον γιγνόμενον, τοιοῦτον ἦν ἐπὶ πᾶν τὴν ἰδέαν. Καὶ ἄλλο παρελύπει κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον οὐδὲν τῶν εἰωθότων· ὃ δὲ καὶ γένοιτο, ἐς τοῦτο ἐτελεύτα.

“Such, then, was the general nature of the disease; for I pass over many of the unusual symptoms, since it chanced to affect one man differently as compared with another. And while the plague lasted there were none of the usual complaints, though if it any did occur it ended in this.” (Thuc. II 51.1)

With these words Thucydides informs the public that he has no intention of speaking further on the physical symptoms of the disease, and at the same time he also introduces the next section of his account: the description of the extraordinarily social consequences provoked by the epidemic.

It should be noticed that the sentence καὶ ἄλλο παρελύπει κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον οὐδὲν τῶν εἰωθότων· ὃ δὲ καὶ γένοιτο, ἐς τοῦτο ἐτελεύτα, echoes the words used at the beginning of the previous section : εἰ δέ τις καὶ προύκαμνέ τι (νόσον) ἐς τοῦτο πάντα ἀπεκρίθη (Thuc.II.49.1). The parallel is hardly fortuitous: the adoption of a similar syntactical structure must be intended as a poetic device used to help the public to recognise the passage from one theme to the other. Oral literature is often characterized by recurrent parallel expressions. Refrains in poetry help the singer to display his tale and the audience to follow the course of events. One example of recurrent syntactical structures can be considered the use of *formulae* in the epic texts probably related to the oral delivery of the Homeric poems.⁴

agree with the version of the event chosen by the historian. At I 23, II 147.1, IV 103, IV 154.1

ὁμολογέω expresses the consensus given to the story by at least two sources, while at II 4.1 it refers to the general consensus with the report written by Herodotus.

⁴ The oral-formulaic theory and the Homeric question have been matters of discussions, especially in recent years. It would exceed the scope of the present exposition to expatiate upon the subject, but the reader may find it useful to refer to A.B. Lord (1960), M.S.Jensen (1980), and R.Finnegan (1988).

In the following chapters, 51 and 52, Thucydides describes the unusual behaviour manifested at the time of the disease, while starting at chapter 53 he generalises on this aspect, and tries to identify its origin. The third section opens with these words: *πρῶτον τε ἤρξε καὶ ἐς τάλλα τῇ πόλει ἐπὶ πλεον ἄνομίας τὸ νόσημα* “In other respects also the plague introduced into the city a greater lawlessness” (Thuc. II 53.1). As in the previous section the transition to a new argument is marked by an introductory sentence. Syntax and vocabulary recall introductory expressions already found in the present account: in fact, we can compare the similar use of *πρῶτον ἤρξε* in chapter 47 and 48. We notice again how Thucydides helps his public to follow the sequence of events: a new argument is each time introduced by similar introductory statements easily recognised by the audience, underlining the unique character of the plague.

The description of the moral degeneration ends the harrowing picture of what happened in Athens during the epidemic of 430 BC. With the closing words on the subject at chapter 54 the author, as at the beginning, raises his voice and speaks in the first person, this time with the intention to relate the story of the misinterpretation of the oracles which occurred during the spreading of the epidemic. The last motif in the introduction, the vain appeal to oracles (47), is echoed here. This practice of enclosing the narrative inside a frame where the same theme figures both at the beginning and at the end of the exposition (in this case the reference to oracles), gives a *circular character* to the narrative as a whole.

The closing words on the Athenian plague work as a summary expression: *ταῦτα μὲν τὰ κατὰ τὴν νόσον γενόμενα* “So much for the history of the plague” (Thuc. II 54.5). A concluding statement which sounds like a Herodotean touch.⁵

⁵ For the use of introductory and summary statements in Herodotus see H.R. Immerwahr (1966, 51 ff.).

Tragic character and influence

The preceding analysis attempted to study the structure of the Plague section as found in the second book of the *History*. As a result, a self contained-account seems to have been identified, a digression framed inside a self-contained structure in which stylistic features have the function of guiding the public towards an understanding of the narrative as it proceeds. The next task is to evaluate the character of this digression and the first help in this direction comes from Thucydides himself.

As we have already said, the epidemic is first mentioned in the *History* at I 23:

Τῶν δὲ πρότερον ἔργων μέγιστον ἐπράχθη τὸ Μηδικόν, καὶ τοῦτο ὁμῶς δυοῖν ναυμαχίαιν καὶ πεζομαχίαιν ταχεῖαν τὴν κρίσιν ἔσχεν. τούτου δὲ τοῦ πολέμου μῆκός τε μέγα προύβη, παθήματά τε ξυνηνέχθη γενέσθαι ἐν αὐτῷ τῇ Ελλάδι οἷα οὐχ ἕτερα ἐν ἴσῳ χρόνῳ. οὔτε γὰρ πόλεις τοσαύδε ληφθεῖσαι ἡρημώθησαν, αἱ μὲν ὑπὸ βαρβάρων, αἱ δ' ὑπὸ σφῶν αὐτῶν ἀντιπολεμούντων [...] τὰ τε πρότερον ἀκοῇ μὲν λεγόμενα, ἔργῳ δὲ σπανιώτερον βεβαιούμενα οὐκ ἄπιστα κατέστη, σεισμῶν τε πέρι, οἱ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἅμα μέρος γῆς [...] ἡλίου τε ἐκλείψεις, [...] αὐχμοὶ τε ἔστι παρ' οἷς μεγάλοι καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῶν καὶ λιμοὶ καὶ ἡ οὐχ ἥκιστα βλάβασα καὶ μέρος τι φθείραςα ἡ λοιμώδης νόσος.

“The greatest achievement of the former times was the Persian War, and yet this was quickly decided in two sea-fights and two land-battles. But the Peloponnesian War was protracted to a great length, and in the course of it disasters befell Hellas the like of which had never occurred in any equal space of time. Never had so many cities been taken and left desolate, some by the Barbarians and other by Hellenes themselves warring against one another [...] And so the stories of former times, handed down by oral tradition, but very rarely confirmed by fact, ceased to be incredible: about earthquakes, for instance, for they prevailed over a very large part of the earth [...]; eclipses of the sun [...]: great droughts also in some quarters with resultant famines; and lastly, the disaster which wrought most harm to Hellas and destroyed a considerable part of the people, the noisome pestilence.”(Thuc. I. 23)

With these words the historian introduces the subject of the history to his public, but he also stresses the importance of the historical events he is going to narrate. The intention of competing with Herodotus is clear: during the Peloponnesian War

“disasters befell Hellas the like of which had never occurred”, whereas the Persian War was resolved in just two sea-fights and two land battles.⁶ Moreover, the whole setting of this introduction is Herodotean in character: in introducing his subject Thucydides responds to the introductory statement made by Herodotus at the beginning of his work, where he reveals his intention to record the “works great and marvellous” (ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστὰ) produced by Hellenes and some by the Barbarians (Hdt.I.1).⁷ The greatness of the Peloponnesian War is attested both by the great military events and by the great marvels occurring at this time: the plague is presented as one of the greatest examples of the incredible events and of the παθήματα occurring during this conflict.⁸ This introduction is important in helping us to understand the general intention of Thucydides when choosing to narrate the history of the Plague. Over and above the historical importance of the epidemic, there is its importance as a dreadful event and both these elements contribute to making the story worthy of narration. The importance and perhaps the space given to the description of the plague in the Second Book should be measured in accordance with the Herodotean perspective in which the story itself is set. The adoption of this perspective might also explain the Herodotean structure we have been analysing in the previous section.

If the plague is considered as one of the greatest unpredictable phenomena that occurred during the war, the next question we should address is how much emphasis, if any, has been laid on the incredible or astounding aspect of the disease throughout the narrative. I have already argued in the previous section that the words devoted by

⁶ Gomme (*HCT*, I. 150 ff.) notes that Herodotus had already said that the Persian War was greater than the Trojan War and A.J.Woodman (1988, 28-32) argues that Thucydides is here competing with Homer.

⁷ Θῶμα often introduces an incredible account in Herodotus. Cf. I 23 where the story of Arion and the dolphin is a θῶμα μέγιστον, I 93 where θῶματα are the marvellous things present in Lybia, and also III 12, VIII 37, VIII 135 etc.. Note, however, that marvellous stories were also included in the works of early Ionian historians and that Herodotus himself acknowledges this fact. At II 21 Herodotus refers to Hecataeus’ theory on the source of Nile (probably FGrHist. I F 18) and says that his opinion is not well grounded on knowledge, but it is marvellous to hear (θαυμασιωτέρη).

⁸ It is interesting to quote what Hornblower (1991, 62) writes in his commentary to Thuc. I 23: “[...] These two chapters prepare us for a very different kind of narrative from what, for the most part, we will actually get. They suggest a sensational and rhetorical narrative with plenty of natural disasters, vividly described human suffering, and portents in the manner of Livy. But in fact the phenomena here listed by Thucydides are rarely, sporadically, and very briefly recorded in his narrative, except for the Great Plague”.

Thucydides at II 47.3 function as an introduction to the subject, but what has still to be noticed is the character of this exposition.

The various arguments mentioned here are disposed in *crescendo*. Not only is the audience informed that such a great calamity has never been experienced by human beings before, but also that no cure was available. The doctors were not able to cure the sick, rather they themselves were the first to die. At last, even the ultimate resource to which human beings make appeal, the Gods, is said to be ineffective. All the possible sources of help sought by people affected by a great disaster are considered to be of no use before the account of the disease begins. In order to stress the distressing situation described, all these different motifs are framed within a single very long sentence in which six negative propositions follow one after the other. In addition, the vocabulary contributes a definitely tragic flavour. It is said that the disease broke out (ἐγκατασκῆψαι, Thuc. II 47.3) on the Athenians: ἐγκατασκῆψαι is verb often found in tragedy in reference to grievous events. In Aeschylus' *Persians* the Messenger ends his account of the misfortunes suffered by the Persian army telling Atossa that: πολλὰ δ' ἐκλείπω λέγων κακῶν ἅ Πέρσας ἐγκατέσκηπεν θεός. "Yet much remains untold of the ills launched by Heaven upon the Persians" (Aesch. *Pers.* 514). It is again the thunder of Zeus which is described as ἐγκατασκῆψον on Heracles consumed by the disease in the *Trachiniae* (Soph., *Trach.* v.1087). More interesting for us is Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Here, it is the plague, as in Thucydides, which "broke out" in the city of Thebes:⁹

[...] ἐν δ' ὁ πυρφόρος θεὸς
σκῆψας ἐλάυνει, λοιμὸς ἔχθιστος, πόλιν,
ὑφ' οὗ κενοῦται δῶμα Καδμεῖον, μέλας δ'
Αἰδης στεναγμοῖς καὶ γόοις πλουτίζεται.

"[...] And withal,
armed with his blazing torch the God of Plague
had swooped upon our city emptying
the house of Cadmus, and the murky realm
of Pluto is full, fed with groans and tears"
(*Oed. Rex* v. 27 ff.)¹⁰

⁹ A. Parry (1989, 177-94) has also noted the parallel use of ἐγκατασκῆψαι in Sophocles and Thucydides.

¹⁰ Text and translation from F. Storr (1912).

All these different elements, when taken together, lead us to conclude that the vocabulary and linguistic structure of the introduction create a dramatic atmosphere in which the abnormal character of the disease is emphasised.

The heightened tone continues throughout the account. The epidemic is said to have originated in a year *unusually* free from any disease (Thuc. II 49.1). Without questioning the good faith of Thucydides in portraying the weather conditions prevailing at the time, placing one of the most terrible diseases that ever broke out in Greece in the setting of an unusually healthy year undoubtedly creates a dramatic contrast.¹¹ The contrast is further stressed by saying that the diseases of *normal* kinds were not much in evidence that year and when they did occur they were overlaid by the plague and that such a terrible sickness attacked people in *perfect health*. Thucydides emphasises the abnormal character of the epidemic by adopting

¹¹ We should notice that in his account of the plague of Athens, Diodorus of Sicily does not refer at all to any healthy condition obtaining that year; on the contrary he seems to insist that the abundant rain during the winter would have been cause of the spread of the infection:

προγεγεννημένων ἐν τῷ χειμῶνι μεγάλων ὄμβρων συνέβη τὴν γῆν ἐνυδρον γενέσθαι, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τῶν κοίλων τόπων δεξαμένους πλῆθος ὕδατος λιμνάσαι καὶ σχεῖν στατὸν ὕδωρ παραπλησίως τοῖς ἐλώδεσι τῶν τόπων, θερμαινομένων δ' ἐν τῷ θερεί τούτων καὶ σηπομένων συνίστασθαι παχείας καὶ δυσώδεις ἀτμίδας, ταύτας δ' ἀναθυμιωμένας διαφθεῖρειν τὸν πλησίον ἀέρα· ὅπερ δὴ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἐλῶν τῶν νοσώδη διάθεσιν ἐχόντων ὁρᾶται γινόμενον.

“As a result of the heavy rains in the previous winter the ground had become soaked with water, and many low-lying regions, having received a vast amount of water, turned into shallow pools and held stagnant water, very much as marshy regions do, and when these waters became warm in the summer and grew putrid, thick foul vapours were formed, which, raising up in fumes, corrupted the surrounding air, the very thing which may be seen taking place in marshy grounds which are by nature pestilential.” (Diod.Sic. XII 58.3, text and translation from C.H. Oldfather (1950)). It is a matter of discussion whether these words refer to the first occurrence of the plague in Athens in 430 BC or to its recurrence in 427 BC. At chapter 45, where this epidemic is first mentioned, Diodorus does not consider the weather among the causes that contributed to spread the disease. The general character of the introductory sentence at chapter 58 does not help to establish the time to which the following description ought to be referred to: “And since history seeks to ascertain the cause of the malignancy of this disease, it is our duty to explain these matters.” The reference at 58.5 to people, who threw themselves into the cisterns and springs in the attempt to cool their bodies, is clearly reminiscent of Thucydides II 49. If the passage quoted refers to the first occurrence of the plague, the same narrated by Thucydides from II 47 ff., we should at least doubt that the weather as described by Diodorus, would favour the healthy year mentioned in our account. According to Grote (1945, v. VI, 188.n.1) Diod. XII 58 should be referred to the revival of the epidemic in the fifth year of the war and can hardly be true of its first appearance: “since Thucydides states that the year in other respects was unusually healthy”. Rhodes (1988, 230) ascribes Diod. 58 ff. to the year 430 BC without giving any further explanation.

the *technique of inversion*. The sequence of statements creates a *peripeteia* worthy of a tragic stage.¹²

Other elements also contribute to the harrowing character of the description. The rapid spread of the infection is stressed: people felt sick *suddenly*, ἐξαίφνης, and the plague descended *immediately*, εὐθύς, to the chest (Thuc. II 49). Any improvement for the patient is unthinkable. People vainly sought relief from pain by throwing themselves into cold water. If anybody survived the acute phases of the disease, the epidemic went down into the bowels producing a violent ulceration. People who got over even this complication, were likely to fail to recognise either themselves or their friends (Thuc. II 49). Thus plausible sources of relief are mentioned only to be immediately dismissed as having had no effect. This alternation between hope and disaster creates overall an intensely dramatic effect.¹³

The impression that Thucydides is composing an astounding and moving account is further confirmed by the opening words at chapter 50.

Γενόμενον γὰρ κρεῖσσον λόγου τὸ εἶδος τῆς νόσου τὰ τε ἄλλα χαλεπωτέρως ἢ κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν φύσιν προσέπιπτεν ἐκάστω...

“Indeed the character of the disease proved such that it baffles description, the violence of the attack being in each case too great for human nature to endure [...]” (Thuc., II 50.1)

The expression κρεῖσσον λόγου is paralleled in tragedy, where it is used to emphasise the indescribable nature of a story that is to be related. Poppo in his commentary points to the similar language employed for the same purpose in Euripides’ *Bacchae* and *Supplikes*.¹⁴ In *Bacchae* it is the messenger who hesitates to relate the incredible actions performed by the women. He has come to tell Pentheus and the whole city: ὥς δεινὰ δρῶσι θαυμάτων τε κρεῖσσον, “what amazing things they perform, things greater than miracles” (Eur. *Bac.* v.664). Closer to our

¹² The value of *peripeteia* in tragedy is expounded by Aristotle in the *Poetics* (1452a 23). There are many cases of reversal of fortune on the tragic stage. The sudden ruin that struck the Sophoclean hero Oedipus in the *Oedipus Rex*, or Heracles in *Trachiniae* may be taken as examples.

¹³ The *Oedipus Rex* gives us one of the best tragic examples of hope that ends in disaster: the information expected by Oedipus to bring salvation to the city affected by the plague will be the first cause of disaster for the king himself.

¹⁴ Poppo (1834, L.III ad c.50).

passage is that in *Supplices*, where Theseus asks Adrastus to explain how it happened that the men who fought at the seven gates of Thebes were so superior to other men in bravery. Adrastus answers with these words:

ἄκουε δὴ νυν· καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἄκοντί μοι
δίδως ἔπαινον ὧν ἔγωγε βούλομαι
φίλων ἀληθῇ καὶ δίκαι' εἰπεῖν πέρι.
εἶδον γὰρ αὐτῶν κρείσσον' ἢ λέξαι λόγῳ
τολμήμαθ', οἷς ἤλπιζον ἀίρησιν πόλιν.

“Listen then. In fact the task you assign me of praising these friends is not unwelcome since I want to say what is just and true about them. I saw their bold deeds greater than words can describe by which they expected to take the city” (Eur. *Sup.* v. 857 ff.)¹⁵

In both cases a striking introduction signals the marvellous and incredible nature of the account to follow. In Thucydides, however, the expression is appended to the end of the description of the symptoms. The author stresses that what has been said up to that point is not all: other unpredictable and incredible events occurred, greater than his own words can tell.¹⁶

If the section on the symptoms stresses the lack of any possible cure, the description of the wider problems caused by the epidemic on the Athenians emphasises the lack of any solution. People affected by the disease died anyway, whether proper nursing was available or not (Thuc. II 51.2). No treatment could be found to stop the spread of the infection, no organism was able to resist it, it made no difference whether one was physically strong or weak (II 51.2-3). People became infected nursing one another and died like sheep (II 51.4). Because escape was almost impossible, the very few who survived started to believe that “they would never be carried off by any other disease” (II 51.6) and were considered blessed by the others (ἐμακαρίζοντο, II.51.6). The whole section revolves around the same concepts: the irremediable nature of the disease and the absence of any possible escape. These ideas are varied and repeated all through chapter 51: as a consequence the whole picture is informed

¹⁵ Text and translation from D. Kovacs (1998).

¹⁶ Worth mentioning in this connection also are two passages in Aeschylus’ *Persians* (vv. 290-292 and 429-432), one by Atossa and the other by the Messenger, commenting on the Persians’ sufferings in the Battle of Salamis.

with a movement and atmosphere that is somehow reminiscent of drama. In this context, the description of the sacrilegious disposal of the dead which closes the second section of the account also makes one think of a tragic finale in the way it acts as an appropriate *climax* for the various horrors described.¹⁷

Thus one has the impression that, within the *logos* marked off in the manner described in the opening section of this Chapter, the account of the Plague is reminiscent of tragedy in its emotional effect and in some of its language. Indeed the disposition of the various themes throughout the whole account may also reflect the structure proper to a tragic play. The play I should like to consider is Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, in which the theme of disease is prominent, and see whether it offers any relevant point of comparison with the description of the plague in Thucydides. Heracles, the great hero, faces a terrible and powerful death because of the poisoned mantle sent him by his wife, Deianira. The νόσος (disease) which affects the hero is powerfully described in v.749 ff. and v. 1000 ff. It is impossible for Heracles to escape from the deadly power of the coat and all his rash movements bring him no relief. No medical means of saving the patient's life are available; even the appeals made to the Gods are useless (v.993 ff.). The Chorus interprets the present disaster as the fulfilment of ancient prophecies (v.821) and the hero himself recognises that his disease had been already foretold by two oracles which had been misinterpreted for a long time (v.1157 ff.). The plague leaves the man who had achieved so much, unable even to help himself. In spite of these sufferings Heracles shows a great firmness and asks his son to put him over a burning pyre (v.1208 ff.).

As we see, the vicissitudes suffered by the hero of this tragedy are comparable with those suffered by Athens because of the plague. As for Heracles' disease, the Athenian epidemic is incurable, recourse to medicine and to the Gods alike is without effect (Thuc. II 47). The Athenians discuss at the time whether such a plague should be considered as being in fulfilment of ancient oracles (Thuc. II 54) and this religious motif is also found in the *Trachiniae*. Moreover, Athens is, like

¹⁷ Similar situation are found in tragedy. *Trachiniae* ends with a scene of burial and *Medea* with the debate between Medea and Jason about the burial of the dead children. *Medea* was produced in the spring of 431 BC (cf. D.L.Page, 1952, p. VI), one year before the plague struck Athens. The date of composition of *Trachiniae* is unattested, but see the different hypotheses advanced by Jebb and Davies (1955, p.XVII), A.Lesky (1957, 283) and E.R.Schwinge (1962, 63).

Heracles, a great and powerful entity destroyed by an unpredictable calamity, but still able to show firm and merciful conduct, as exemplified by those who cared for the sick (Thuc. II 51.5). The description of the plague given by Thucydides terminates, like *Trachiniae*, with the dramatic picture of mournful burning pyres, those where the dead Athenians are thrown on top of one another confusedly.¹⁸

At this point we are able to answer to our original problem: whether the plague is in any way presented as a *θαῦμα* by Thucydides or not. The answer is in the affirmative: throughout the account of the epidemic emphasis is laid on the incredible nature of the disease and the atmosphere that prevails in the whole account, an atmosphere comparable to what might be felt in a tragedy, emphasises its catastrophic aspect.

Our analysis of the character of Thucydides' account of the plague would not be complete without a reference to a dispute on the interpretation of oracles introduced at the close of the narrative, at chapter 54. Here the historian reports the different interpretations of an oracular verse advanced at the time of the disease:

ἐν δὲ τῷ κακῷ οἷα εἰκὸς ἀνεμνήσθησαν καὶ τοῦδε τοῦ ἔπους, φάσκοντες οἱ πρεσβύτεροι πάλαι ἄδεσθαι ἥξει Δωριακὸς πόλεμος καὶ λοιμὸς ἅμ' αὐτῷ. Εγένετο μὲν οὖν ἔρις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις μὴ λοιμὸν ὀνομάσθαι ἐν τῷ ἔπει ὑπὸ τῶν παλαιῶν, ἀλλὰ λιμόν, ἐνίκησε δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος εἰκότως λοιμὸν εἰρησθαι· οἱ γὰρ ἄνθρωποι πρὸς ἅ ἔπασχον τὴν μνήμην ἐποιοῦντο.

“And in their distress they recalled, as was natural, the following verse which their older men said had long ago been uttered : ‘A Dorian war shall come and pestilence with it’. A dispute arose, however, among the people, some contending that the word used in the verse by the ancients was not *λοιμός*, ‘pestilence’, but *λιμός*, ‘famine’, but¹⁹ the view prevailed at that time that ‘pestilence’ was the original word; and quite naturally, for men’s recollections conformed to their sufferings.” (Thuc. II 54)

¹⁸ The only reference to the *Trachiniae* in relation to Thucydides' description of the plague that I am aware of is in Grote as quoted by Gomme (*HCT*, II.147), but the comparison he makes is restricted to the mention of oracles made in both texts.

¹⁹ Here I depart from the Loeb translator, who writes “and”.

At first sight the section has a technical character and lies outside the tragic flavour that characterises the whole picture of the plague. If we are right in arguing that Thucydides outlines a tragic description of the disease and presents the epidemic as an event competing with the λεγόμενα ἄπιστα narrated in the past, we then have to understand what is the relationship between this section and the overall account of the epidemic. Woodman seems already to have provided an answer to our question when he states that:

“the prophecy, in one of his versions, recalls the words of Achilles in *Iliad* I. [...] By these means Thucydides directs his readers’ attention towards Homer and invites them to see his own account of the Athenian plague and its sequel in Homeric terms.”²⁰

This explanation fits in with Woodman’s own theory that the picture of the plague given by Thucydides is directly influenced by the Homeric description of the pestilence in the first book of the *Iliad*. The reference to animals killed by the plague at chapter 50 would also be meant to recall Homer where dogs and mules are the first to be infected by the disease.²¹ Woodman notes that the association between λοιμός and λιμός is found in Hesiod, while plague and war are associated in tragedy.

Here it is relevant to go beyond Woodman’s point and examine more closely these related concepts. In the *Works and Days* plague and famine are two of the calamities sent by the Gods against the men who committed wrongdoing:

Πολλάκι καὶ ξύμπασα πόλις κακοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἐπαυρεῖ,
ὅς τις ἀλιτράϊνη καὶ ἀτάσθαλα μηχανάαται.
τοῖσιν δ’ οὐρανόθεν μέγ’ ἐπήγαγε πῆμα Κρονίων
λιμόν ὁμοῦ καὶ λοιμόν· ἀποφθινύθουσι δὲ λαοί.

“Often has even a whole city reaped the evil fruit of a bad man. Who sins and puts in practice deeds of infatuation. Of them then from heaven the son of Cronus is want to bring great calamity, famine and pestilence at the same time: so the people waste away”. (Hesiod *W. D.* vv.240 ff.)

The familiarity with these words must have been widespread if Aeschines can still use the wrong-doing of the man described by Hesiod as a comparison for that of Demosthenes and assume that the parallel would be easily grasped by his audience

²⁰ Cf. A.J.Woodman (1988, 35).

²¹ Cf. A.J.Woodman (1988, 38).

(*Against Ctesiphon*, 3.135). Likewise, the sin of Oedipus causes a disease that afflicts the whole of Thebes in the *Oedipus Rex* (*Oed.* v.28 ff.).²²

What is less commonly noticed is the association of war, famine and plague in the *Old Testament*.²³ In the book of *Prophets* “sword, famine and pestilence” often occur together as punishments sent by the Lord (*Jer.* 14:12; 24:10; *Ezek.* 6:11 etc.). In the book of *Numbers* God punishes the Israelites with pestilence (14:12). In *Kings* the people of Israel when facing plague or famine are struck by remorse in their own hearths (8.37) while in *Samuel* (24:10) the Lord is said to have three things in store for the people: famine, war and pestilence, and asks them to choose one of them. Because the people preferred plague: “the Lord sent a pestilence throughout Israel from morning till the hour of dinner, and from Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand of the people died.” The story also appears in *Chronicles* I.21.

These passages confirm that the idea of an epidemic disease as a divine punishment was widespread in the Mediterranean area. The extent to which these texts may have exercised any influence on the Greeks is hard to ascertain, especially as the various parts of the *Old Testament* are difficult to date. What emerges from these examples is rather that a well established tradition both in Hebrew and in Greek texts by the time of Thucydides attributes epidemic disease and war to divine responsibility and considers them as punishments for human wrongdoing.

Does Thucydides himself subscribe to that view? He appears to distance himself from the different interpretations of oracles advanced by his contemporaries at the time when the plague struck Athens. The reiteration of the concept of εἰκός at chapter 54 may involve an implicit polemic against how the Athenians approached old prophecies: ἐν δὲ τῷ κακῷ οἷα εἰκὸς ἀνεμνήσθησαν (II.54.1), .. ἐνίκησε δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος εἰκότως λοιμὸν εἰρῆσθαι (II.54.3). Such polemic becomes explicit in the following lines:

²² The idea of disease in general as a punishment sent by the Gods is also attested in Herodotus. See the story of Cleomenes (VI 75-84) and Pheretima (IV 205). Some Scythians who plundered a temple are said to be punished by the goddess with the “female sickness” (I 105).

²³ There is no reference to this association in the commentaries on Thucydides. For an analysis of the plague-descriptions in the Bible see R. Crawford (1914, pp.1-21), who points out that in the *Old Testament* the plague is regarded as a direct consequence of God’s anger. He also notes that all the Hebrew words for plague indicate a “blow” just as an arrow is the instrument used by Apollo to send pestilence in the *Iliad* (I.44).

Οἶμαί ποτε ἄλλος πόλεμος καταλάβῃ Δωρικὸς τοῦδε ὕστερος καὶ
ξυμβῇ γενέσθαι λιμόν, κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς οὕτως ἄσονται

“But if ever another Dorian war should visit them after the present war and a famine happen to come with it, they would probably, I fancy, recite the verse in that way” (II 54.3)

These words have often been taken as a sign of a rational attitude shown by the historian towards matters of common religious belief, but we must be very careful not to over estimate such a scientific approach. Thucydides does not criticise the value of the prophecy, but the behaviour of the Athenians in trying to interpret oracular responses to fit their actual circumstances.²⁴ In the quest for evidence for Thucydides’ religious attitude we may also find it useful to look at the last part of chapter 54. Here, Thucydides reports a view shared by many persons at the time of the epidemic: before the beginning of the war, the Delphic oracle had lent its support to the Spartans and now, the fact that the plague did not actually spread into the Peloponnese corroborated the idea that in the present conflict the Gods were on the Spartan side (II.54.4-5). Thucydides had already spoken of this oracular response in the first book and on both occasions no critical evaluation is appended to the report.²⁵ The polemical tone struck by Thucydides as regards popular interpretations of an ancient prophecy, doubtless only orally preserved, does seem necessarily not to extend to all prophecy and oracles themselves.²⁶ Following these considerations, we should now be able to provide an answer to our original question and say that although Thucydides does not take up any explicit position on the question of divine responsibility for the epidemic, precisely this silence may imply his acceptance (or at least non-denial) of traditional views.

²⁴ Here, I share the view expressed by Nanno Marinatos in her book on Thucydides and religion (1981, 47 ff.) and Oost (1975, 193-4). Marinatos’ introductory chapter (1-16) is a useful survey of different interpretations as regards the relationship between Thucydides and religion in general. Marinatos disagrees with the widespread idea that Thucydides was an atheist. On the contrary, her considerations fully support her view that the historian respected the traditional religious beliefs of his own age in spite of his rational attitude: “The mutual exclusion of science and religion is a modern idea. Both in antiquity and in later times there are examples of the peaceful coexistence of the two because science asks ‘how’ whereas theology asks ‘why’”.

²⁵ Cf. Thuc. I. 118.3.

²⁶ In the course of a discussion on the subject Mr. G. Howie suggested that Thucydides does not dismiss the idea that Apollo was in fact responsible for the plague that struck the Athenians. On the contrary, this non-critical report could be intended to remind the public of Apollo as the God who sent the plague during the Trojan War. This interpretation would accord with Nanno Marinatos’ idea that Thucydides shared the traditional views of his own time in matters of religion.

But what of the argument that the plague was a punishment for human wrongdoing? In this case, our text does not provide any evidence that the historian favoured the view of fault and retribution. On the contrary, instead of the traditional idea that human wrong-doing is followed by consequent punishment, Thucydides describes how the plague itself led human beings into wrongdoing and moral degeneration. An idea traditionally accepted is simply left aside and a new one is introduced in the attempt to give a rational interpretation of the events. This new rational approach according to which moral degeneration follows a catastrophic event, will replace in time the traditional concept of fault and retribution. These words of Plato attest the distance that had been travelled by his time from the ancient way of thinking:

ΑΘ. ἔμελλον λέγειν ὡς οὐδεὶς ποτε ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲν νομοθετεῖ, τύχαι δὲ καὶ ξυμφοραὶ παντοῖαι πίπτουσαι παντοίως νομοθετοῦσι τὰ πάντα ἡμῖν. ἢ γὰρ πόλεμος τις βιασάμενος ἀνέτρεψε πολιτείας καὶ μετέβαλε νόμους, ἢ πενίας χαλεπῆς ἀπορία· πολλὰ δὲ καὶ νόσοι ἀναγκάζουσι καινοτομεῖν λοιμῶν τε ἐμπιπτόντων, καὶ χρόνον ἐπὶ πολὺν ἐνιαυτῶν πολλῶν πολλάκις ἀκαιρίας.

“(Athen.) I was on the point of saying that no man ever makes laws, but chances and accidents of all kinds, occurring in all sorts of ways, make all our laws for us. For either it is a war that violently upsets politics and changes laws, or it is the distress due to grievous poverty. Diseases, too, often force on revolutions, owing to the inroads of pestilences and recurring bad seasons prolonged over many years [...]”
(Plato, *Laws* IV 709, A)²⁷

Such an argument may appear inconsistent with the previous considerations about the traditional attitude revealed by the historian towards oracles. In fact, what I have been trying to show is that a scientific and rational attitude as regards religious beliefs does exist and is verifiable in the account of the plague, but it does also coexist with a respect for a more traditional approach to religion. The problem of divine responsibility in connection with the epidemic must have been an argument widely debated at the time and Thucydides' public may have expected that such an issue would come into consideration in an account on the plague. The historian does take it into consideration, but he does this in the closure not in the course of the main account. Outside the tragic context created by the picture of Athens thrown into

²⁷ Text and translation from R.G. Bury (1942).

upheaval by the epidemic, Thucydides can discuss critically matters of common religious belief, presenting to his public his rational approach, a rational approach that had developed from a traditional religious attitude.

Scientific value and Hippocratic influence

The evidence collected in the course of our analysis has led us to consider the account of the Athenian plague in the second book of the *History of the Peloponnesian War* as a self-contained narrative with tragic character. One issue that has not come under consideration till now is the degree of influence that medical treatises may have exercised on Thucydides' writing. Many scholars have already dealt with this subject and valuable considerations have been advanced on the medical competence shown by the historian and the scientific character of his exposition of the symptoms of the epidemic.²⁸ The physical effects of the plague are skilfully described, showing a certain medical expertise, but the use of such technicalities coexists, as we have tried to show, with the inclusion of poetic features, some of them with a striking affinity to tragedy. Besides, while it is evident that Thucydides employs many words otherwise found in Hippocratic treatises, it is also true that he seems to avoid misusing technical terms or to excuse himself for not mentioning further medical data. Speaking of the disorders produced by the plague in the stomach, Thucydides says that:

Οπότε ἐς τὴν καρδίαν στηρίζειεν, ἀνέστρεφέ τε αὐτὴν καὶ ἀποκαθάρσεις χολῆς πάσαι ὅσαι ὑπὸ ἱατρῶν ὠνομασμέναι εἰσὶν ἐπῆσαν...

“And when it settled in the stomach, that was upset, and vomits of bile of every kind named by physicians ensued ...” (Thuc. II 49 .3)

²⁸ See D.L.Page (1953, 97-119), A.Parry (1989), J.De Romilly (1947, 46 ff.), J.H.Finley (1947, 70, 150 ff.), M.Marshall (1990, 163-70), M.C.Mittelstadt (1968, 145-54). Many articles deal with the problem of identifying the disease Thucydides describes: W.P.MacArthur (1954, 171-4), E. Watson Williams (1957, 98-103), J.R.Pinault (1986, 52-75), J.C.F.Poole and A.J.Holladay (1979, 282-300), J.Solomon (1985, 121 ff.). Because of the great number of articles and works published on the subject, these indications do not claim to be exhaustive and should rather be taken as a first reference for the reader.

We understand that the historian knows all these different names, but he does not want to alienate the reader with such medical vocabulary. At the same time, as one whose strongest claim to authority on the matter is not a medical training or experience of treating patients but experience of the disease as a patient himself, he is free to pass over many of the unusual symptoms of the disease.

Τὸ μὲν οὖν νόσημα, πολλὰ καὶ ἄλλα παραλιπόντι ἀτοπίας, ὥς ἐκάστω ἐτύγγανέ τι διαφερόντως ἑτέρῳ πρὸς ἕτερον γιγνόμενον, τοιοῦτον ἦν ἐπὶ πάν τὴν ἰδέαν.

“Such, then was the general nature of the disease; for I pass over many of the unusual symptoms, since it chanced to affect one man differently as compared with another” (Thuc. II 51.1)

A more technical account is avoided: Thucydides will confine himself to give a picture of the “general nature” of the disease.

It is interesting to compare the Thucydidean account on the plague with *Epidemics* III, one of the works belonging to the Hippocratic corpus, which describes an infectious disease. Although some scholars have thought that the unknown author is describing the plague of Athens of 430 BC, there is no clear evidence in support of this view.²⁹ The different symptoms of the disease are outlined without any emphasis on the distress caused by the sickness. The description has the structure of a medical report without any sign of rhetorical elaboration. Contrary to the practice adopted by Thucydides, the author expatiates upon the individual manifestations of the plague. More importantly, both at the beginning and at the end of this treatise the verb γράφω is used with reference to the work: the author will write about the consumptives in due course (II) and he hopes that “what has been written” (περὶ τῶν γεγραμμένων, XVI) will be of some use for the future. Thucydides, on the contrary, employs λέγω at chapter 48, to refer to his own account on the plague.

According to a recent study on the Hippocratic writings the alternative use of γράφω or λέγω may distinguish the medical treatises meant to be published as a written

²⁹ Poppo's commentary on Thucydides (1834, vol.III, 254ff.) cites *Epidemics* III as one example of a text where a description of the plague is found and S.Hornblower (1991,321) also compares the beginning of chapter 49 in Thucydides with *Epidemics* III 2 .

work from the ones intended to be delivered.³⁰ Jouanna singles out two compositions in the Hippocratic corpus as intended for oral delivery: the *Art* and the *Winds*. These works are characterised by the presence of the author speaking in the first person to his public: he adopts rhetorical devices to make his arguments more effective especially at the beginning and at the end of the exposition. The time required for delivering these pieces would be around 28-30 minutes, whereas the works intended to be published would take a time of one hour or one hour and a half to be read aloud. R.Thomas accepts the existence of medical compositions intended for oral delivery and writes that in these texts the author gives the impression of contending with an opponent.³¹ What both Jouanna and Thomas have in effect recognised in these works, is the presence of elements supporting the performance of the account: short length, rhetorical devices, clear demarcation of beginning and end, and an authorial voice seeking to catch and hold the attention and the favour of the audience. The idea of rhetoric being employed in medicine in Greece is supported by good evidence that medical practitioners often had to convince patients of the reliability of the cure or even of their own effectiveness.³² There is also evidence that physicians had to deliver a public oration in order to win acceptance and be permitted to practice.³³ We may also mention that in Herodotus the doctor Demokedes reveals his oratorical skill convincing the queen Atossa to follow his advice.³⁴ Thus medical treatises intended for oral delivery naturally share some common characteristics with other compositions of rhetorical nature.³⁵

At this point we should take up again our original question: what is the relationship between the account of the plague in Thucydides and Hippocratic works? Excessive use of technical language is avoided in our account as well as the scientific references to all the different symptoms. The Hippocratic style of cool scientific expression is not adopted, and tragic features give to the account a dramatic flavour. On the other

³⁰ See J.Jouanna (1984, 26-44).

³¹ See R.Thomas (1993, 225-44).

³² See L.Bourgey (1953, 90n.3).

³³ According to Xenophon (*Mem.* IV,2.5) the candidates for the office of public physicians used to pronounce a speech. Plato (*Gorgias*, 456.B) also refers to physicians who had to contend in speech before the Assembly when entering a city. Cf. also L.Cohn-Haft (1956).

³⁴ Cf .Hdt. III c.129 ff.

³⁵ Medical treatises reveal also an association between ancient medicine and pre-Socratic philosophy: see J.Longrigg (1963, 147-76) and (1993).

hand, the influence of medical works is clear in the medical competence exhibited by the historian, and words like τεκμήριον and πρόφασις mark the process of exposition as in the Hippocratic corpus.³⁶ If we are right to ascribe to the account a self-contained Herodotean *logos*, including elements meant to support the performance of the text, the relationship with orally delivered medical works may now be considered. Medical notions are in fact here enclosed within an account of very modest length in which the author himself states his authority in dealing with the subject.

Λεγέτω μὲν οὖν περὶ αὐτοῦ ὥς ἕκαστος γινώσκει καὶ ἰατρὸς καὶ ἰδιώτης, ἅφ' οὗτου εἰκὸς ἦν γενέσθαι αὐτό, καὶ τὰς αἰτίας ἄστινας νομίζει τοσαύτης μεταβολῆς ἱκανὰς εἶναι δύναμιν ἐς τὸ μεταστῆσαι σχεῖν· ἐγὼ δὲ οἶον τε ἐγίγνετο λέξω, καὶ ἅφ' ὧν ἂν τις σκοπῶν, εἴ ποτε καὶ αὖθις ἐπιπέσοι, μάλιστ' ἂν ἔχοι τι προειδῶς μὴ ἀγνοεῖν, ταῦτα δηλώσω αὐτός τε νοσήσας καὶ αὐτὸς ἰδὼν ἄλλους πάσχοντας.

“Now any one, whether physician or layman, may, each according to his personal opinion, speak about his probable origin and state the causes which, in his view, were sufficient to have produced so great a departure from normal conditions; but I shall describe its actual course, explaining the symptoms, from the study of which a person should be best able, having knowledge of it beforehand, to recognise it if it should ever break out again. For I had the disease myself and saw others sick of it”.

(Thuc. II 48.3)

Very seldom in the whole of his work does Thucydides speak in his own voice.³⁷ This declaration seems also to counteract possible objections coming from some physicians. At the same time, the use of λέγω seems to confirm the link with orally delivered medical texts. This introduction is comparable with the preliminary words devoted by the author of the *Art* to a defence of the value of his own exposition against possible detractors: the speaker proposes to tell (λέγω *Art* I.1) his discoveries because knowledge is better than a state of ignorance. The utility of the work of doctors is also defended at the beginning of *Breaths* (I.1).

As a whole, then, Thucydides' account of the plague has proved to be a very rich narrative section in which different literary features intertwine. Therefore,

³⁶ Both Gomme (*HCT*, II. 156) and S.Hornblower (1991, 321-3) comment on the use made by Thucydides of these words.

³⁷ J.H.Finley (1947, 8) notes that this is one of the only four occasions in which Thucydides speaks of himself in the *History*. Cf. also A.W. Gomme (1951, 70-80) and D. Gribble (1998, 41-67).

in order to gain a better view of the story it is hardly proper to study in isolation and take into account only Herodotean, or tragic or medical features. All of these seem in fact to contribute in different degrees in order to form the self-contained account that we have described.

Some final remarks should be added to our study of this subject. If we accept the idea that the account of the plague was originally intended for an autonomous delivery outside the overall context of the history, we would be able to offer a reasonable explanation for some inconsistencies occurring within the context. J. De Romilly noted that at the end of each year of war mention is made of the author's name (ὃν Θουκυδίδης ξυνέγραψεν), and only twice is the name omitted: at II 47 and IV 116.³⁸ De Romilly considers the omission in Book Two as evidence for the late composition and inclusion of the Funeral Oration inside the work, but it could also be accounted for by the late insertion of the account of the plague, which follows the Funeral Oration, into the context of the second book. Moreover, chapter 47 marks the transition between two accounts (the funeral speech and the plague) which in their different ways may both be considered as originally autonomous, and the accidental omission of this technical feature during the process of unifying the two narratives inside the context of the book, may seem at least a feasible hypothesis.

Second, when in Book Three Thucydides again mentions the plague, he informs us that the first time this epidemic had run for two full years and no fewer than four thousand four hundred of those enrolled as *hoplites* died and also three hundred cavalry and of the populace a number that could not be ascertained (Thuc. III 87). These data come out unexpectedly in the third book because in the previous account no mention is made of how long the plague lasted or about the number of deaths caused. One of the possible conclusions is that the plague account was written no more than two years after the outbreak of the disease. It is true that if this piece of information had been supplied in the second book, the chronological report of events would have been interrupted, but because the account of the plague seems otherwise to function as a digression, such an intrusion would not have created so much damage. If inserted in that context, that information could have enhanced the very effect Thucydides seems to be aiming at in his account of the Plague. Moreover, the possible criticisms that the story might raise, mentioned by Thucydides at chapter 48, are more

³⁸ Cf. J. De Romilly (1947, 46).

understandable in a period near to the outbreak of the disease when different physicians must have tried to study the phenomenon and provide possible explanations for it.³⁹ Thucydides as a witness and victim himself of the disease writes his own version of the event.

³⁹ Examples of polemic among doctors are referred by L.Bourgey (1953, 100) who cites the criticism made by Diocles against Hippocrates' opinion, as stated in *Epidemic I*, on the different kinds of fevers (Galenus, XVII A 222-23, XVII B 530 K and Diocles frag. 34).

CHAPTER FOUR

The debate on Mytilene in Thucydides' Book III: a hypothesis on its composition

In this chapter I am going to analyse the Mytilenaeen debate as presented by Thucydides in Book Three. My aim is to see whether this episode could have been presented to the public in isolation from the rest of the work. For this purpose I shall analyse the account as a whole for characteristics compatible with oral performance and the two speeches within it for characteristics that would even have been compatible with delivery on the actual occasion. Overall, I shall be trying to see whether this account contains artistic motifs that might be shared with other orally delivered genres that would heighten the attention of a potential audience. This will be followed by an analysis of the general context in which the Mytilenaeen debate is situated in the attempt to discover any sign of *inconsistencies* arising from later integration of the episode into the surrounding narrative. Finally, I shall consider the possible reasons why an account of this debate could have been of independent interest and what sorts of audiences might have been drawn to it.

The structure

From chapter 35 to 50 of Book Three, Thucydides presents a debate which he says took place during a second meeting of the Athenian assembly convened in order to discuss what sort of punishment the Athenians should inflict on the people of Mytilene for their revolt. During an earlier meeting a proposal by Cleon to kill all the adult men and enslave the women and children had been approved. Subsequently, the Athenians had decided to reconsider the matter and the assembly had been summoned a second time. Among the speeches delivered in that occasion Thucydides singles out those of Cleon and Diodotus, presumably as representative of the two opposing views

on the issue.¹ In view of the popularity of Cleon as a politician at the time and the fact that his proposal had already won favour in the first session, it seems a natural choice to include a report of his speech. On the other hand, the opposing speech delivered at the assembly by Diodotus introduces into the *History* a political figure not otherwise known, who here makes his only appearance in Thucydides' work. The perennial question of whether the speeches and exchanges in Thucydides correspond to original reports or are a literary construct, has often been raised in connection to the Mytilenaeon debate. Some commentators think that the topics covered in both orations do not satisfy the requirements to be met by real speeches delivered in the Athenian assembly.² But an analysis of the debate may reveal that such an idea is not supported by real evidence and that it is not implausible to hypothesise that speeches along those lines could have been delivered on the actual occasion.

Cleon's opening has a polemical tone. His attack focuses on the inability of the democratic government to rule over others and on the gullibility of the Athenians, who do not hesitate to grant their approval to the most skilful among the orators and do not pay attention to what are the best interests of their city. Cleon begins his speech by attacking the demos: *πολλάκις μὲν ἤδη ἔγωγε καὶ ἄλλοτε ἔγνων δημοκρατίαν ὅτι ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν ἑτέρων ἄρχειν...* "I have remarked again and again that a democracy cannot manage an empire..." (III 37.1). These words must have captured the attention of the audience. *ἤδη* is often used at the beginning of an oration. According to Lausberg *iam* (*ἤδη*) represents: "an insinuatory device for encouraging the audience to feel a need for information and motivating their attentiveness [...]. It moves the audience to fear they have missed an important piece

¹ On the process of selecting the material to be included in the *History* in general see S. Hornblower (1987, 34-44 and 45-72) and L. Canfora (1972).

² Cf. A. Andrewes (1962, 62-63) who argues that the debate as a whole "does not read much like an authentic report" (p. 73) and concludes that it represents "at best an incomplete picture of the actual proceedings, and one can feel no strong confidence that Thucydides tried to confine himself here to arguments which he knew to have been used at the time" (p. 79). Similarly Gomme (*HCT*, II. 315) writes: "The quarrel between Diodotus and Cleon is as much about how to conduct debate in the ecclesia as about the fate of Mytilene [...] the real debate has been simpler and less sophisticated". J. De Romilly (1963, 160) stresses how the systematic contrast between the two speeches "was rather improbable in an actual debate". An opposite view is expressed by D. Kagan (1975, 70-94). He believes that there is no reason to argue that the debate as reported by Thucydides is fictitious. H. D. Westlake (1973, 90-108) in a study of the setting of the Thucydidean speeches, notes that: "the tone of the preamble (3.36) and postscript (3.49) [of the Mytilenaeon debate] contrasts with that of the speeches, which is intellectual" (p. 97).

of information, thereby inducing them to follow the thread of the narrative more attentively”.³ A strong polemical preamble is justified in the context of the present situation: Cleon, whose proposal had already been accepted by the Athenian assembly during the earlier session, found himself forced by the Athenians’ sudden change of mind to return to the issue and defend his policy. We also know from other sources that Cleon was accustomed to resort to a violent kind of oratory.⁴ Nevertheless, we cannot consider Cleon’s opening as unusual. Topics of praise or blame are constituent elements of proems, according to the later classification of oratorical constructions made by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*.⁵ Finley also notes that a similar complaint about the gullibility of the people towards orators is found in speeches in tragedy (Eur. *Suppl.* 415-6) and comedy (Aristoph. *Acharn.* 380/502, *Equ.* 710).⁶ Throughout his speech Cleon employs a defensive tone. A comparable emphasis on the speaker’s own person (ἐγώ), together with criticism of the “clever speakers” and the attitude of the audience towards them, is also found in the opening of Antiphon’s defence speech *On the murder of Herodes*. The parallel is particularly interesting in view of the fact that Antiphon’s speech mentions the revolt at Mytilene and was probably delivered in one of the summer months of the year 424 BC, and hence at a time close to the setting of the Mytilenaeen debate.⁷ It may therefore be taken as an example of oratory contemporary with Cleon’s own speech as reported by Thucydides. In our oration Cleon accuses the Athenians of claiming the right to change the laws and question their value instead of upholding the decree already passed. This is comparable with the position of the speaker at the beginning of Antiphon’s *On the choreutes* where he urges the jury not to be induced by the previous speech to question whether the laws are good or bad but to enforce them.

Parallel and antithetical constructions are displayed throughout the introduction. Cleon complains that when speeches are to be heard the Athenians are too fond of using their eyes, but where actions are concerned, they trust their ears (III 38.4). The audience despises what is familiar, but worships every new extravagance

³ Cf. H. Lausberg (1998, 128).

⁴ Cf. Aristophanes, *Knights* v. 627 ff.. Further discussion on the Aristophanic picture of Cleon will be found later on in this chapter.

⁵ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1414 b, II 14.1.

⁶ Cf. J. Finley (1967, 29). See also Lysias’ *Speech* 25. Polemic against the orators who persuade the public not with what is true, but with what “seems to be true” is found in Plato *Phaedrus* (260 A).

⁷ For a discussion leading to hypothesise a possible date of delivery of Antiphon’s fifth oration see P. S. Breuning (1937, 67-70).

(III 38.5). Antitheses are consistently employed by Gorgias of Leontini, the Sicilian rhetorician who arrived in Athens precisely in the year 427 BC according to our sources.⁸ But there are earlier examples of antithetical structures in speeches. Finley has rightly pointed out that some tragic dialogues as early as 442 BC already evidence the use of such a technique.⁹ In chapter 39 the *πρόθεσις* (or “narratio”) begins. According to Aristotle the *πρόθεσις* is a “brief summary of the matter to be proved”.¹⁰ In the present case it is a contention that no city has ever injured Athens so deeply as Mytilene. At this point proofs (*πίστεις*¹¹) have to be given in support of this statement and in the core of the chapter Cleon explains what the Mytileneans did to Athens and why they deserve to be punished effectively. Cleon’s political attitude is clearly based on a defence of *raison d’etat*: the Mytilenaeans had no good reason to revolt. Because Athens had treated them with indulgence, they became insolent; and they must all be considered equally responsible for the secession. Forgiveness is more dangerous for Athens than punishment because other subjects would be encouraged to revolt and Athens would then have to fight against her own allies. Cleon insists on the principle of justice: the punishment he proposes is commensurate with the wrongdoing of the Mytilenaeans and will serve as a deterrent for the future. According to the Aristotelian classification of oratorical genres, assessments derived from the choice between *δίκαιον* and *ἄδικον* belong to the *forensic* more than to the *symbolleutic genre*.¹² We might therefore consider it surprising that this topic should have been developed at such length in a speech delivered before the Athenian assembly. Nevertheless, we cannot forget that Cleon is speaking in defence of himself and his policy against the attacks already mounted against them. His task at this stage is not only to propose a course of action, but also to defend a proposal, that had been already accepted and was then brought back into question by the Athenians. The polemical opening along with the similarities with topics proper to defensive speeches and court speeches in general provide further evidence of the defensive tone of the speech.

⁸ F.M. Wassermann (1956, 27-41) draws attention to the fact that Gorgias came to Athens during the year in which this debate took place.

⁹ Cf. J. Finley (1967, 78).

¹⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.13, 1414 b, 9.

¹¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.17.1, 1418 a ff.

¹² Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.*, 1.3, 1358 b, 22 ff.

There then follows a call to banish pity (ἐλέου ἐκβολή) and not be misled by the charm of words or by a too forgiving temper (III 40.2-3). Mercy, Cleon says, should be reserved for the merciful, clever orators ought not to try their skills on matters of such great importance for the city, and forgiveness must be shown towards friends rather than enemies.

ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν καὶ τότε πρῶτον καὶ νῦν διαμάχομαι μὴ μεταγνῶναι ὑμᾶς τὰ προδογμένα, μηδὲ τρισὶ τοῖς ἀξυμφορωτάτοις τῇ ἀρχῇ, οἰκτῶ καὶ ἡδονῇ λόγων καὶ ἐπιεικεία, ἀμαρτάνειν. ἐλεός τε γὰρ πρὸς τοὺς ὁμοίους δίκαιος ἀντιδίδοσθαι, καὶ μὴ πρὸς τοὺς οὗτ' ἀντοικτιοῦντας ἐξ ἀνάγκης τε καθεστῶτας αἰεὶ πολεμίους· οἳ τε τέρποντες λόγῳ ῥήτορες ἔξουσι καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις ἐλάσσοσιν ἀγῶνα, καὶ μὴ ἐν ᾧ ἡ μὲν πόλις βραχέα ἡσθεῖσα μεγάλα ζημιώσεται, αὐτοὶ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ εὖ εἰπεῖν τὸ παθεῖν εὖ ἀντιλήψονται· καὶ ἡ ἐπιείκεια πρὸς τοὺς μέλλοντας ἐπιτηδεύουσιν καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν ἔσεσθαι μᾶλλον δίδοται ἢ πρὸς τοὺς ὁμοίως τε καὶ οὐδὲν ἦσσαν πολεμίους ὑπολειπομένους.

“Therefore, I still protest, as I have from the first, that you should not reverse your former decision or be led into error by pity, delight in eloquence, or clemency, the three influences most prejudicial to a ruling state. For compassion may rightly be bestowed upon those who are likewise compassionate and not upon those who will show no pity in return but of necessity are always enemies. As to the orators who charm by their eloquence, they will have other opportunities of display in matters of less importance, and not where the city for a brief pleasure will pay an heavy penalty while they themselves get a fine fee for their fine speaking. And clemency would better be reserved for those who will afterwards be faithful allies than be shown to those who remain just what they were before and no whit the less our enemies.” (Thuc. III 40, 2-3)

According to MacLeod, Cleon here adopts the rhetorical technique of *amplificatio* as it is explained by Aristotle (*Rhet.*, 1365a10) and exemplified by Antiphon (*Tetral.* I g 11): a phenomenon is divided into parts so as to lend it greater rhetorical weight.¹³

In his conclusion Cleon again resorts to the antithetical style in order to re-state his advice: if the Athenians follow his advice they will be doing what is just to the Mytilenaeans, otherwise they will be condemning themselves out of their own mouths. A bold declaration follows: εἰ γὰρ οὗτοι ὀρθῶς ἀπέστησαν, ὑμεῖς ἂν οὐ χρεὼν ἄρχοιτε, “If these people were right to revolt, then your rule cannot be

¹³ Cf. C.W.MacLeod (1983, 96)

rightful” (III 40.4). A polemical overtone characterises the end as much as the opening of this speech. Some scholars have spoken of the paradoxical character of this last sentence.¹⁴ However, the paradox might be explained as an extreme example of defensive argument: if the punishment was wrong, that is to say, if Cleon’s advice was wrong, your empire is wrong as well. If the empire as such is a heritage worth defending, then the decree proposed by Cleon must be upheld; in other words, Cleon uses the idea of the very legitimacy of the Athenian empire in order to defend his own policy.¹⁵

Diodotus’ speech has to counter these arguments. Its structure accordingly runs parallel to the preceding speech by Cleon.¹⁶ In his opening Diodotus replies to the accusations made by Cleon. Two negative propositions figure as introductory sentences: the speaker declares that he does not blame those who call for a reconsideration of the sentence passed on the Mytilenaeans and he does not approve of the aspersions cast on the practice of deliberating more than once on critical issues:

οὔτε τοὺς προθέντας τὴν διαγνώμην αὐθις περὶ Μυτιληναίων αἰτιῶμαι
οὔτε τοὺς μεμφομένους μὴ πολλάκις περὶ τῶν μεγίστων βουλευέσθαι
ἐπαινῶ, νομίζω δὲ δύο τὰ ἐναντιώτατα εὐβουλία εἶναι τάχος τε καὶ
ὀργήν, ὧν τὸ μὲν μετὰ ἀνοίας φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαι, τὸ δὲ μετὰ ἀπαιδευσίας
καὶ βραχύτητος γνώμης.

“I have no fault to find with those who have proposed a reconsideration of the question of the Mytilenaeans, nor do I commend those who object to repeated deliberation on matters of the greatest moment; on the contrary I believe the two things most opposed to good counsel are haste and passion, of which the one is wont to keep company with folly, the other with an undisciplined and shallow mind.” (Thuc. III 42.1)

This is a direct response to Cleon’s invective in chapter 37. Then a long section follows (III. 42-43) which is devoted to defending the figure of the honest advocate, again in reply to the charges moved by Cleon against the “clever speakers” (III. 37,

¹⁴ Cf. C.W. MacLeod (1983, 96), who speaks of self-contradiction. Gomme (*HCT*, II. 310) also notes that here Cleon contradicts what he has just said about the Athenian empire considered as a tyranny at 37.2. We will discuss later on to what extent these affirmations may look like echoes of Pericles’ ideas.

¹⁵ P. E. Arnold (1992, 44-57) notes that the arguments used by Cleon are fallacious, but also persuasive. Arnold finds a reference to this kind of rhetoric in Demetrius, *De Eloc.* II 222.

¹⁶ L. Bodin (1940, 36-52) notes the parallelisms detectable in Cleon’s and Diodotus’ speeches.

38). Diodotus' real *πρόθεσις* starts at chapter 44. He focuses on the idea of future expediency (*ξυμφέρον*), and invites the Athenians not to be misled by the apparent justice of Cleon's proposal into rejecting the solid advantages that imposing a milder punishment may bring for Athens.

ἦν τε γὰρ ἀποφῆνω πάνυ ἀδικοῦντας αὐτούς, οὐ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀποκτεῖναι κελεύσω, εἰ μὴ ξυμφέρον, ἦν τε καὶ ἔχοντάς τι ξυγγνώμης, ἔαν, εἰ τῇ πόλει μὴ ἀγαθὸν φαίνοιτο. νομίζω δὲ περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος ἡμᾶς μᾶλλον βουλευέσθαι ἢ τοῦ παρόντος.

“For no matter how guilty I show them to be, I shall not on that account bid you to put them to death, unless it is to our advantage; and if I show that they have some claim for forgiveness, I shall not on that account advise you to spare their lives, if this should prove clearly not to be for the good of the state”. (Thuc. III 44. 2)

The tone of Diodotus' speech is noticeably different from that of Cleon. The aggressive character is replaced by a more rational and calm approach to the subject. Thus Cleon's defensive speech is countered by a “*real*” *symbolleutic oration*. According to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, while one of the main characteristics of the *δικανικὸν γένος* involves passing judgement on a matter belonging to the past, the *συμβουλευτικὸν γένος* “is the political speech given before the assembly of the people gathered for a deliberation and requested to frame a decision and the speaker recommends or warns against an action belonging to the future.”¹⁷ Here, the speaker's intended assessment (*τέλος*¹⁸) of the action derives chiefly from the alternative between *συμφέρον* (necessary) and *βλαβερόν* (unnecessary). Because the Mytilenaeen debate is, in spite of Cleon's attitude, a *symbolleutic* debate held before the Athenian assembly, the emphasis given to the consideration of expediency by Diodotus seems quite justified in this context. Moreover, the most likely reason why Diodotus insists on expediency is that this is the only *convincing* argument that can be used against the *apparent* defence on grounds of justice made by Cleon. In chapter 45 the argument of expediency is linked to considerations relating to human nature. Like Cleon in the preceding speech, Diodotus makes use of *πίστεις*: harsh punishments will prove to be ineffective because human nature cannot be restrained either by the power of law or by any other deterrent. In fact, the death penalty did not prevent the

¹⁷ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.3, 1358 b 7-8. and H. Lausberg (1998, 32).

¹⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.3, 1358, b 21.

diffusion of crimes in many states where it was introduced (45.1). This is an argument from probability (εἰκός¹⁹) which is then supported by other considerations relating to human nature.

Ἡ τε ἐλπίς καὶ ὁ ἔρως ἐπὶ παντί, ὁ μὲν ἡγούμενος, ἡ δ' ἐφεπομένη, καὶ ὁ μὲν τὴν ἐπιβουλὴν ἐκφροντίζων, ἡ δὲ τὴν εὐπορίαν τῆς τύχης ὑποτιθεῖσα, πλεῖστα βλάπτουσι, καὶ ὄντα ἀφανῆ κρείσσω ἐστὶ τῶν ὀρωμένων δεινῶν.

“Then, too, Hope and Desire are everywhere; Desire leads, Hope attends; Desire contrives the plan, Hope suggests the facility of Fortune; the two passions are most baneful, and being unseen phantoms prevail over seen dangers”. (Thuc. III 45.5)

Diodotus is making a generalisation here. Rhetorically, these lines are an *amplificatio*, an unnecessary expansion of his main argument on the ineffectiveness of a severe penalty. But this section that extends till the end of chapter 45 is more than a stylistic device. Diodotus is actually calling attention back to motifs that were an integral part of the traditional set of values shared by his audience. The great and destructive power of ἔρως is recalled by Hesiod (*Theog.* 120). In the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus (341) passion is “the negative impulse which first assailed the soldiery to ravish what they should not” and Isocrates employs similar terms (*Helen*, 52). Ἐλπίς is the last thing left in the vase of Pandora (*W.D.* 96), the extreme resource left to human beings in case of necessity.²⁰ Pindar comments that precisely hope in association with passion may lead to disaster:

ἀλλὰ τοι
ἤρατο τῶν ἀπεόντων· οἷα καὶ πολλοὶ πάθον.
ἐστὶ δὲ φύλον ἐν ἀνθρώποισι ματαιότατον,
ὅστις αἰσχύνων ἐπιχώρια παπταίνει τὰ πόρσω
μεταμῶνια θηρεύων ἀκράντοις ἐλπίσιν.

“No! She was enamoured of things elsewhere; that passion, which many, ere now, have felt. For, among men, there is a foolish company of those, who putting shame on their home, cast their glances afar, and pursue idle dreams in hopes that shall not be fulfilled”. (*Pyth.* III. 20 f.)

¹⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2, 19. 23, 1392 a and also Antiphon's *Tetralogiae* A_α 2

²⁰ The question of the interrelationship between parts of the *History* of Thucydides and passages from wisdom literature will be further studied in relation with the description of the stasis at Corcyra in Thuc. III 70-84. See our discussion in chapter six.

Diodotus' words must have had the effect of recalling the attention of his audience back to this traditional ideas.²¹

In chapters 46 and 47 Diodotus leaves aside any theoretical consideration and proceeds to support his thesis with practical evidence. If the Athenians choose a harsh punishment to inflict on the Mytilenaeans many other allies will be led to revolt: Athens will have to fight her own allies and they will not pay tribute to her in future. Moreover, Athens will lose the support of the democratic party in the other cities.²² This is what Aristotle would call the *demonstrative enthymemes* which consist in σκοπεῖν τὰ προτρέποντα καὶ ἀποτρέποντα, καὶ ὧν ἔνεκα καὶ πράττουσι καὶ φεύγουσιν· ταῦτα γὰρ ἐστὶν ἃ ἐὰν μὲν ὑπάρχη δεῖ πράττειν ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ὑπάρχη, μὴ πράττειν “considering the inducements and drawbacks, the reason for doing or avoiding an action; for these are the conditions which, according as they are present or absent, make an action desirable or undesirable.”²³ At the closing of the speech at chapter 48 Diodotus repeats that his advice is for the good of the Athenians and recapitulates his reasons. This attempt to dispose the hearer favourably towards the speaker and the technique of recapitulating the main points covered in the course of the speech conforms with normal practice in

²¹ Note that F.M.Wassermann (1956, 27-41) expressed doubts regarding the suitability for a public oration of this digression on human behaviour. For a contrary view see J.Finley (1967, 32-3). We should remember, however, that references to human behaviour are elsewhere found in public speeches. Herodotus reports that Themistocles before the battle of Salamis: προηγόρευε εὖ ἔχοντα μὲν ἐκ πάντων Θεμιστοκλέης, τὰ δὲ ἔπεα ἦν πάντα κρέσσω τοῖσι ἥσσοσι ἀντιτιθέμενα, ὅσα δὴ ἐν ἀνθρώπου φύσι καὶ καταστάσι ἐγγίνεται “Themistocles made an harangue in which he excelled all the others; the tenor of his words was to array all the good in man's nature and estate against the evil in order to exhort them to choose the better”. (Hdt. VIII 83).

²² In the course of the debate Cleon and Diodotus express contrary views regarding the involvement of the demos in the revolt. Cleon affirms that at Mytilene nobles and commons alike should be punished as being equally guilty (39), while Diodotus expressly says that the commons of Mytilene took no part in the revolt (47). The problem has troubled various scholars and different interpretations have been put forward. C.Orwin (1984, 485-94) favours the idea that Mytilene was an oligarchic government and that only the ruling class had effectively supported the revolt. R.P.Legon (1968, 200-225) does not find any evidence in Thucydides that the Mytilenean demos favoured Athens; rather the demos seems not to have been against the revolt so long as enough food was available. D.Gillis (1971, 38-47) points out that Salaethus only took the step of giving weapons to the population when the situation had become desperate. He believes that Diodotus' point of view might be correct, although too generous towards the demos. T.J.Quinn (1971, 405-17) argues in favour of the idea that Mytilene in 428 BC had an oligarchic government. H.D.Westlake (1976, 429-440) does not find any evidence in Thucydides to support the idea that the demos wanted to revolt against Athens and establish a democracy. De St.Croix (1972, 40-41) believes that the lower classes were not so keen to revolt and were not interested in fighting for a freedom that would have benefited not themselves but their rulers, and indeed would have been likely to result in “increased domination by the few”.

²³ Aristotle, *Rhet.* II 23. 20, 1399 b.

perorations (ἐπίλογοι). What is missing, is an appeal to pity. Instead, Diodotus advises the Athenians *not* to yield to pity or leniency. This approach is made necessary by the ἐλέου ἐκβολή in Cleon's speech. The audience must be persuaded that, if they decide to follow Diodotus' advice they are not being misled by a skilful orator, but are choosing the policy most advantageous to themselves: ὅστις γὰρ εὖ βουλευέται πρὸς τοὺς ἐναντίους κρείσσων ἐστὶν ἢ μετ' ἔργων ἰσχύος ἀνοίᾳ ἐπιών "For wise counsel is really more formidable to an enemy than the severity of meaningless violence" (III. 48.2).

As we can see, the parallel structure of these two speeches creates an ἀντιλογία: two opposing speeches whose structures go in parallel. Contemporary evidence for familiarity with antithetical discourses is possibly provided by the *Tetralogies* of Antiphon, which, as we have seen, present some points of contact with our debate. The Δίσσοι Λόγοι are one of the few surviving examples of opposing arguments arranged in an antithetical rhetorical structure. However, the problem of dating that work makes it difficult for us to consider it as a source of information regarding the origin of Thucydides' debating style.²⁴ Better evidence for contemporary orally delivered ἀντιλογία is available in tragedy. In Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Antigone* Finley finds the first examples of complete opposing speeches. The highly symmetrical structure of these debates would have been enhanced when the speeches were delivered orally and this must have won the favour of audiences. This would explain why antithetical and symmetric constructions were further adopted and developed by Euripides in tragedies like *Medea* and *Hippolytus*.²⁵

Following these considerations let us turn again to the Mytilenaeen debate in Thucydides. The points of comparison raised in the course of this study between the Mytilenaeen debate and other examples of contemporary speeches both in oratory and in tragedy reveal similarities between Thucydides' prose and orally delivered texts. Apart from the *Tetralogies* in fact (which many have considered more as a rhetorical treatise than as speeches really performed²⁶), tragic or comic passages and oratorical

²⁴ For considerations on the date of composition and the influences from different sources which seems to be detectable in the Δίσσοι Λόγοι see T.M. Robinson (1979, 34-41).

²⁵ Cf. J. Finley (1967, 72 ff.). In fact other examples of antithetical speeches are already present in Homer, and for a parody of the Sophistic debates see Aristophanes' *Clouds* (vv. 890 ff.), where there is an altercation between the better and the worse argument.

²⁶ Cf. F. Decleva Caizzi (1969, 21) and M. Gagarin (1997, 32-35).

defensive speeches were intended for oral delivery. Moreover, the debate conforms to the rules set forth for such speeches almost a century later by Aristotle. Thus the two speeches are correctly formed for delivery, though how far they reflect speeches actually delivered on that occasion cannot be determined. On the other hand, the contemporary taste for *antilogiae* suggests that they are in any case highly suitable for oral presentation either as a true reflection of the occasion or as literary constructs.

Narrative devices employed within the episode

Having demonstrated some relationship between the style of the Mytilenaeen debate as reported by Thucydides and speeches intended for oral delivery in live debate, rhetorical demonstration, or drama, I turn to their immediate narrative setting.

In chapter 36, Thucydides does much to underline the haste of the Athenians' initial decision to execute the Mytilenaeans (τάχος, III. 36.3). That decision had been motivated by anger (ὑπὸ ὀργῆς) a disposition directly related to haste as the words of Diodotos later confirm (τάχος τε καὶ ὀργήν, III. 42.1). It is stressed that the Athenians were eager to carry out the punishment and had sent the ship bearing their order to Mytilene "in haste" (κατὰ τάχος, III. 36.2). Within a short space of time the people decided to reconsider the matter and Thucydides says that the same degree of haste characterised the Athenians' change of mind. The Athenians re-considered their decision "at once" (εὐθὺς, III. 36.4) and a second assembly was "immediately" (again εὐθὺς, III. 36.6) convened. In their speeches at that assembly both Cleon and Diodotos have something to say regarding this rapid decision-process. For Cleon haste is a good thing and he urges the Athenians not to let that initial eagerness cool down (III. 38.1). Diodotos, on the other hand, warns of the dangers to which such an attitude can lead (III. 42.1). After the two speeches, Thucydides' own way of reporting the new decision also underlines the role of this factor. Here, in chapter 49, the author informs us of the result of the second deliberation: the moderate view of Diodotos prevailed and a second trireme was immediately (εὐθὺς) sent to Paches

countermanding the earlier order. The voyage was made in such haste (σπουδή τοιαύτη, III. 49.3) that the seamen never stopped rowing:

καὶ τριήρη εὐθὺς ἄλλην ἀπέστελλον κατὰ σπουδὴν, ὅπως μὴ φθασάσης τῆς προτέρας εὖρωσι διεφθαρμένην τὴν πόλιν· προεῖχε δὲ ἡμέρα καὶ νυκτὶ μάλιστα. παρασκευασάντων δὲ τῶν Μυτιληναίων πρέσβεων τῇ νηὶ οἶνον καὶ ἄλφιτα καὶ μεγάλα ὑποσχομένων, εἰ φθάσειαν, ἐγένετο σπουδὴ τοῦ πλοῦ τοιαύτη ὥστε ἥσθιόν τε ἅμα ἐλαύνοντες οἶνω καὶ ἐλαίῳ ἄλφιτα πεφυρμένα, καὶ οἱ μὲν ὕπνον ἤρουντο κατὰ μέρος, οἱ δὲ ἤλαυνον.

“They then immediately despatched a second trireme with all haste, hoping that the first trireme, which had the start by about a day and a night, might not arrive first and the city be found destroyed. The Mytilenaeen envoys provided wine and barley for the crew and promised a large reward if they should arrive in time; and such was their haste on the voyage that they kept on rowing as they ate their barley-cakes, kneaded with wine and oil, and took turns at sleeping and rowing”(Thuc. III. 49.3).

The haste Thucydides describes must have been a factor in the real events. Nevertheless, his account is surely framed in such a way as to stress speed as a literary motif. Haste characterises the entire picture. It *connects the different moments and helps create a striking and suspenseful concentration of events inviting comparison with drama*.²⁷

This aspect of Thucydides’ presentation of these events becomes more evident when we consider a whole series of what I call *false expectations* raised within it.

In chapter 36 Thucydides introduces Cleon as “most violent” (βιαιότατος) and “with the greatest power of persuasion” (πιθανώτατος). Many scholars have noted that this introduction is unusual in Thucydides. This is the only occasion on which the author passes a substantial judgement of his own on a figure about to speak.²⁸ The description of Cleon as “very violent” hardly disposes one to follow this account in a

²⁷ On the motif of haste in this narrative Connor (1984, 86) comments: “the reader shares in the eagerness for it [the trireme] to arrive in time”.

²⁸ Cf. A.G.Woodhead (1960, 300) speaks of the “unprecedented step” of a second introduction for Cleon. Moreover, the tone of the presentation conveys to the reader a negative impression of Cleon from the start, an impression that, in Woodhead’s view, is not fully justified. H.D.Westlake (1968, 60-85) notes that Cleon is the only important contemporary figure who Thucydides openly condemns. D.Kagan (1975, 71-94, p.82) notes that Thucydides here uses “a rare instance of direct characterisation of an individual”.

dispassionate spirit. Yet at the same time it seems to me that Thucydides is also deliberately misleading his public. He tells us that Cleon “had also won the previous motion” (καὶ τὴν προτέραν ἐνενικήκει).²⁹ The use of the particle καὶ, which I translate as *also*, and of the verb νικάω (to win) instead of some more neutral expression, seems designed to create an expectation for a further victory of Cleon. This impression is also strengthened by the description of him as a man who has the greatest ability to persuade. Only at the end of the whole debate will that expectation be revealed as false when it is said that ἐγένοντο ἐν τῇ χειροτονίᾳ ἀγχώμαλοι “although the show of hands was very close” Diodotos’ proposal prevailed. (III 49.1).

The same artful kind of arrangement recurs in connection with another motif in this narrative. At chapter 36 the author tells us that a trireme had been sent to Paches to announce the decision of the first assembly. We have already noted that Thucydides stresses the haste with which the Athenians wanted the first sentence executed and that the ship had been sent “in a hurry”. Nothing else has been said about the first expedition; in the meantime the speeches of Cleon and Diodotos have to be imagined as being delivered while the first ship was on its way to Mytilene. It is only at chapter 49 that we realize that the ship had not sailed as quickly as expected, the reason being that the heralds found their job a very distasteful one. The fact that the first trireme had travelled at a low speed and the second had a following wind makes it possible for that second ship to arrive in time to prevent the orders being carried out. It is not just the emphasis on the haste of the second voyage that creates a dramatic effect, therefore, but there is also the way Thucydides arranges the whole story, as something that is not a foregone conclusion. The author seems to be deliberately creating **false expectations** of how the situation will turn out. These devices give dramatic tension to the story and through the creation of internal correspondences in the narrative setting of the speeches, the whole presentation of the debate becomes *cohesive* and a *self-sufficient unity*.

²⁹ C.Forster Smith (1958, 57, Loeb ed.) translates “Who had been successful in carrying the earlier motion to put the Mytileneans to death”. He recognises the idea of victory implied in ἐνενικήκει, but omits to translate καὶ. J.Voilquin (1966, 198) and F.Ferrari (1985, 515) omit to translate καὶ, H.Vretska (1966, 205) and H.G.P.Landmann (1973, 218) translate “schon” (“already”), similarly L.Canfora (1996, 375) who translate “già”(already). R.Crawley (1876, 37) translates “the same who” and R.Warner (1954, 180) “it was he who had been...”, in both cases καὶ is not translated literally.

If the presence of such an artful arrangement strengthens the possibility of the Mytilenaeen debate being an integral narrative picture, then we have to consider how well that narrative has been later integrated into the completed history. Comparison of Thucydides' account of the stasis in Mytilene with what he then says in chapter 35 reveals some *inconsistencies*. Chapter 28 tells us that after the stasis the Mytilenaeans ποιοῦνται κοινῇ ὁμολογίαν πρὸς τε Πάχητα καὶ τὸ στρατόπεδον “joined in coming to terms with Paches and the attacking forces” and that they were πρεσβεῖαν δὲ ἀποστέλλειν ἐς τὰς Αθήνας Μυτιληναίους περὶ ἑαυτῶν, “to send an embassy to Athens on their own behalf” (III.28.1). Meanwhile some Mytilenaeans installed themselves as suppliants at the altars in Mytilene. Thucydides then tells us that: Πάχης δ' ἀναστήσας αὐτοὺς ὥστε μὴ ἀδικῆσαι, κατατίθεται ἐς Τένεδον μέχρι οὗ τοῖς Αθηναίοις τι δόξη “Paches persuaded them to leave, promising that he would do them no wrong, and place them on Tenedos, until the Athenians should reach a decision”.³⁰ Now, when Thucydides returns to the situation in Mytilene in chapter 35 no mention is made of the outcome of the Mytilenaeen mission to Athens. Moreover, Paches is able to decide on his own initiative. Thucydides writes:

ὁ δὲ Πάχης ἀφικόμενος ἐς τὴν Μυτιλήνην τὴν τε Πύρραν καὶ Ἐρεσον παρεστήσατο, καὶ Σάλαιθον λαβὼν ἐν τῇ πόλει τὸν Λακεδαιμόνιον κεκρυμμένον ἀποπέμπει ἐς τὰς Αθήνας καὶ τοὺς ἐκ τῆς Τενέδου Μυτιληναίων ἄνδρας ἅμα οὓς κατέθετο καὶ εἰ τις ἄλλος αὐτῷ αἴτιος ἐδόκει εἶναι τῆς ἀποστάσεως· ἀποπέμπει δὲ καὶ τῆς στρατιᾶς τὸ πλεόν. τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς ὑπομένων καθίστατο τὰ περὶ τὴν Μυτιλήνην καὶ τὴν ἄλλην Λέσβον ἥ αὐτῷ ἐδόκει.

“After returning to Mytilene Paches reduced Pyrrha and Eresus, and having caught Salaethus the Lacedaemonian in hiding in the town sent him off to Athens, as also the Mytilenaeen men whom he had placed for safe-keeping in Tenedos, and any others who seemed to him to blame for the revolt. He also sent back most of his army; with the rest he remained, and proceeded to settle the affairs of Mytilene and of Lesbos in general as seemed best to him”. (Thuc. III 35)

³⁰ Gomme comments: “ i.e. Paches had been given no powers to conclude peace, or to guarantee any term of peace” (*HCT*, II 290). Hornblower (1991, 410) writes: “ Meiggs (*The Athenian Empire*, Oxford, 1972, p.313), followed by Westlake (*Studies*, 1989, p.52), suggests that Paches had in mind the fate of the generals at Potidea (II 70), who got in trouble for making terms without reference to the assembly”.

While at chapter 28 Paches is apparently not free to take any decision on this matter without previous approval by the Athenian assembly, at chapter 35 he appears to have the authority to act on his own initiative. No reason is given for this change in Paches' behaviour, and the earlier reference to a mission to Athens is completely forgotten.³¹

There is another element that might not be considered an inconsistency but it is at any rate unusual: this is the conclusion of chapter 35. When Thucydides says that Paches organised matters concerning Mytilene and the rest of Lesbos as he thought best (καθίστατο τὰ περὶ τὴν Μυτιλήνην καὶ τὴν ἄλλην Λέσβον ἢ αὐτῷ ἐδόκει), he repeats a form of expression already employed at chapter 28. There, Thucydides reports what Paches had decided on some military matters prior to a naval expedition: καὶ τᾶλλα τὰ περὶ τὸ στρατόπεδον καθίστατο ἢ αὐτῷ ἐδόκει “and made such other dispositions with reference to the army as seemed best to him” (III 28.3). In chapter 35 Thucydides uses the same phrase ἢ αὐτῷ ἐδόκει (it seemed [best] to him), in conjunction with the same verb καθίστατο, and a parallel expression related to the situation (τὴν ἄλλην / τᾶλλα) in respect of the same character as in chapter 28, and in both cases the sentence serves as a conclusion of a narrative unit. The use of a similar structure within so short a space produces an effect of redundancy and it is surprising that the author has not felt the need to eliminate it.

Finally, one might ask why Thucydides needs to remind us in chapter 36.1 that the Plataeans ἔτι γὰρ ἐπολιορκοῦντο “were still under siege” when the account of the situation at Plataea had been interrupted only few chapters earlier (24) and will be taken up again in chapter 52. A careful reader of a continuous text should still be able to remember the continuing siege at Plataea. This last anomaly has also been noted by G. Mathieu, who interprets it as a sign of imperfect revision of the work.³² Mathieu's theory might possibly be extended to explain the other anomalies I have

³¹ Gomme (*HCT*, II. 297) writes: “Presumably a decree has been passed by the Athenians to send them, with Salaithos and any other presumed ringleader of the revolt, to Athens; otherwise Paches would have been breaking his word (Classen). It is not, however, impossible that Paches did break his word” On the historical figure of Paches see H.D. Westlake (1975, 107-116). Westlake tries to discover what might have happened to him after the affair of Mytilene. There is no further mention of him in Thucydides, but Plutarch (*Nic.* 6.1 and *Arist.* 26.5) reports that he was convicted at his εὐθυνα and committed suicide by falling on his sword in the law court.

³² Cf. G. Mathieu (1940, 250).

found in the text as such. But, we have to ask, is that the only possible explanation for them?

Taken together, these elements seem to me best explained by the hypothesis that Thucydides' account of the Mytilenean debate from chapter 35 to chapter 50 was a piece of narrative that was *unconnected*, or at least *not well connected* with what he has already said in the course of his narrative about Mytilene. We might therefore suppose that chapter 35 marks the beginning of what was originally intended as a self-contained independent account of the debate held at that second Athenian assembly. If the episode was originally independent, the end of chapter 35, which now echoes so much of the similarly concluding sentence in chapter 28, would not have been repetitive then. While Thucydides' omission of the outcome of an embassy sent by Paches to Athens at chapter 28 might be noted by a reader of a continuous text, it would not cause any inconsistency if chapter 35 was originally the beginning of a self-contained account. Likewise, the considerable degree of independence ascribed to Paches would not create any difficulty in an independent version not including the matters contained in the sections now preceding chapters 35-50 in the full work as it now stands. On the other hand, in such a self-contained account the reminder that Plataea was still under siege would not have been superfluous in the way it is now, and there would have been good reason for reminding the public about the exact period during which these events took place. All these arguments suggest that the text of Thucydides from chapter 35 to chapter 50 presents a unity of structure that combines passionate debate with a suspenseful and moving series of events; and it is at least possible to hypothesise *a self-contained presentation*.

Why the Mytilenaeen Debate might have warranted individual performance or publication.

However, the hypothesis that Thucydides' account of the Mytilenaeen debate was performed raises many questions. First: why should Thucydides have selected this topic for a public reading?

From an historical point of view the decision on the Mytilenaeans had an important political effect: it contributed to the shaping of Athenian policy towards the allies. Cogan rightly observes that: “in this debate we find almost the precise moment at which opinion in Athens shifted from one interpretation of Athenian policy to another [...]. From this moment all Athenian alliances were with democracies or democratic factions alone, and all captures of cities by the Athenians involved a change in the form of government”.³³ Moreover, the debate selected for extended presentation is the second one. Thucydides omits to say anything about the speeches delivered during the first, and reports those of the second assembly. We have already noted the dramatic character of the situation, but we should also consider that convening a second meeting with a view to reconsidering a decision was in itself an extraordinary action for the Athenians.³⁴ Finally, if we consider the speakers involved in the debate, the decision of the assembly constitutes a defeat, as we have noted, for a politician with great influence in Athens at that time, Cleon. It is true that we do not know political life in Athens well enough to be able to establish how common or uncommon it was for Cleon to suffer setbacks in historical reality, but he clearly was a popular leader and his defeat on this occasion might be regarded “as an event of some note”.³⁵

The Mytilenaeon debate is Cleon’s first appearance in the *Histories*. We will encounter him again in connection with the military campaign at Pylos and at Amphipolis. The picture offered there is consistent with that in Book Three, and develops it. Thucydides emphasises that his policy on Pylos was not motivated by tactical or patriotic reasons, but by personal considerations: his main intention was “to dispel the resentment which he felt against himself” (IV 27). He is a *δημαγωγός* who proposes a risky military campaign for the sake of saving himself much more than for furthering the interests of his city.³⁶ Even the positive result he gained from the campaign is, according to Thucydides’ account, the consequence of *τύχη* and because he took advantage of the plans already formed by the general on the spot,

³³ M.Cogan (1981a, 52-3).

³⁴ Cf. A.R.W.Harrison (1955, 26-35).

³⁵ Cf.M.Cogan (1981a, 52).

³⁶ As we have seen, Cleon is named here *δημαγωγός καὶ πιθανώτατος* (IV.21.3). Gomme (*HCT*, III. 461) hypothesises this be a sign of lack of final revision of the *Histories*. We might question if lack of revision does not imply the possibility that single sections of Thucydides’ work, originally self-standing, were subsequently co-ordinated into a unity.

Demosthenes (IV 29. 2).³⁷ Thucydides' final comment confirms this negative impression: Cleon is the man whose promise had been fulfilled "mad as it was" (IV 39.3). There were people at the time who, as Thucydides himself puts it, λογιζόμενοις δυοῖν ἀγαθοῖν τοῦ ἑτέρου τεύξεσθαι, ἢ Κλέωνος ἀπαλλαγήσεσθαι, ὃ μᾶλλον ἤλπιζον, ἢ σφαλεῖσι γνώμης Λακεδαιμονίους σφίσι χειρώσεσθαι "reflected that they were bound to obtain one of two good things: either they would get rid of Cleon, which they preferred, or if they were disappointed in this, he would subdue the Lacedaemonians for them" (IV 28.5).³⁸ Thucydides' account of the later campaign at Amphipolis does not offer any more favourable picture. Thucydides sarcastically shows Cleon looking at the apparently under-defended city and only regretting that he could have conquered it easily (ἐλεῖν γὰρ ἂν τὴν πόλιν διὰ τὸ ἐρημον, V.7.5). His account of the battle outside the city stresses the courageous conduct of Brasidas: the Spartan leader is contrasted with an Athenian commander who hastily retreats and is killed while running away (V 10,9).³⁹ Thus the overall view of Cleon in Books Three, Four, and Five is clearly a properly finished part of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. However, Aristophanes' similarly negative picture, which was presented to the public in the course of Cleon's career, reveals that there would have been an interested public sympathetic to Thucydides' presentation of the Mytilenaeen Debate and the events immediately connected with it at any time afterwards. The *Knights* and the lost *Babylonians* were an open satire against him and criticism is also present in the *Clouds* and the *Wasps*.⁴⁰ It is, after all, unlikely that everything Aristophanes states or implies in serious terms is his invention. It is much more likely that most of it was current in the public mind in Athens itself and among Athens' allies and enemies. It is thus possible to envisage an interplay already taking place between Thucydides' account of the Mytilenaeen episode and the Athenian and wider Greek public's own

³⁷ Thucydides presents the military plan as a design of Demosthenes: τοιαύτη μὲν γνώμη ὁ Δημοσθένης τό τε πρῶτον τὴν ἀπόβασιν ἐπενόει καὶ ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ ἔταξεν "such was the idea that Demosthenes had in mind when he devised the plan of landing, and such were his tactics when he put this into effect" (IV 32.4).

³⁸ Cf. Gomme (*HCT*, III. 469).

³⁹ Gomme notes the negative presentation of Cleon as Strategos: "τὴν ἐκείνου ἡγεμονίαν πρὸς οἶαν ἐμπειρίαν... (V,7.2). The whole sentence shows the strong bias against Cleon, a hatred and contempt for him as does the next section and the account of his death" (*HCT*, III. 637).

⁴⁰ At the bottom of Aristophanes' animosity towards Cleon there was probably a personal reason: the comedian was apparently taken to court twice by the politician. Cf. A.H.Sommerstein (1980, 2-3).

view of Cleon at any time after the event as well as between the completed picture, including Pylos and Amphipolis.

In the *Knights*, the earliest of the plays preserved dealing with Cleon, we seem to observe a sort of *inversion*. Some of the characteristics attributed to Cleon by Aristophanes, and doubtless already by many members of his audience, also appear in Thucydides' account, but they are the very accusations that Cleon himself levels at his opponents. One of the terms used against the skilful speakers in Aristophanes is δεξιότης (dexterity) which allows such a speaker to prevail over his rivals. When Paphlagon⁴¹ is accused of deceiving the people, he frankly acknowledges the charge and boasts: καὶ νῆ Δί' ὑπό γε δεξιότητος τῆς ἐμῆς δύναμαι ποιεῖν τὸν δῆμον εὐρὺν καὶ στενόν "And what is more, by Zeus, with my wizardry I can make Demos expand and contract at my pleasure" (*Kn.v.719-20*). While in *Knights* Cleon's figure takes the charge as a compliment, Thucydides' Cleon complains of the use of such rhetorical ability made by *others*. He proclaims that: ἀμαθία τε μετὰ σωφροσύνης ὠφελιμώτερον ἢ δεξιότης μετὰ ἀκολασίας "ignorance combined with self-restraint is more serviceable than dextrous cleverness combined with recklessness" (Thuc. III 37.3). This is the only occurrence of the word δεξιότης in Thucydides and it is used here by a person who is associated with this quality in comedy.⁴² The same ignorance (ἀμαθία) preferred by Cleon in Thucydides to cleverness is one of the main things for which Cleon himself is mocked in comedy. Paphlagon in *Knights* is credited with a "pig-education" (ὕομουσία, v.986) and the reason why the Sausage-Seller triumphs over Paphlagon is because he is even less educated than the Cleon figure.⁴³

Another, similar, kind of inversion is found in connection with the Mytilenaeen question itself. In Thucydides' account of the debate Cleon twice accuses his

⁴¹ For the historical identification of Paphlagon with Cleon see A.Sommerstein (1981, 3) and J.McGlew (1996, 349). For the many references to Cleon in Aristophanes' plays see M.Croiset (1973) and C.W.Fornara (1973, 24).

⁴² Gomme (*HCT*, II. 300) reminds that "cleverness" was the quality of Alkibiades, whom Cleon feared and hated equally. A possible example of δεξιότης practised by Cleon himself in the Mytilenaeen debate is his use of the word νόμος instead of ψηφίσματα in order to confuse the audience about the status of the decision being reconsidered (cf. R. P. Winnington-Ingram, 1965, 70-82).

⁴³ Cf. 62.2-3 and IV 40; II 40. 2-3 and 62.5; II 65.2 and III 38.2. These parallels have been often recognised.

opponent of having been bribed by the Mytilenaeans. At III 38.2 he speaks against a man who, he says, has been “incited by bribery” (κέρδει ἐπαιρόμενος) and who is trying to deceive the people by giving the Mytilenaeans’ arguments a respectable appearance. Cleon returns to this accusation when he urges his hearers to distrust speeches “bought with money” (χρήμασιν ὠνητήν, 40.1). These words are openly directed against Diodotos who rejects them in his reply. On the other hand, in *Knights* Cleon himself is repeatedly accused of taking bribes and a specific charge is made regarding the Mytilenaeen affair: the Sausage-Seller says καὶ σ’ ἐπιδείξω νῆ τὴν Δήμητρ’, ἥ μὴ ζῶην, δωροδοκῆσαντ’ ἐκ Μυτιλήνης πλεῖν ἢ μινᾶς τετταράκοντα “I will prove, by Demeter, else may I not live that you took a bribe from Mytilene of more than forty minas” (v.832).⁴⁴ There is some later evidence for a belief that Cleon had made money out of the affair. Lucian says that Cleon received a bribe of no less than ten talents from Lesbian people resident in Athens.⁴⁵

Aristophanes picture of Cleon also sheds light on the latter’s comparison of Athens’ power over her allies to a tyranny (III.37), which scholars have seen as an echo of a point made in Pericles’ last speech in Thucydides (II.63.2). I shall return to that link below. In the *Knights* the Cleon figure, Paphlagon, repeatedly invokes this idea, which indicates that it was pretty certainly also invoked by the historical Cleon (cf. v. 797,965). When issuing from Cleon’s lips, it may well have sounded particularly unpleasant to some members of the audiences of both Aristophanes and Thucydides. In the *Knights* Cleon is accused of behaving like a tyrant himself. Demos dubs him Antileon, that is, comparing him with one of the first tyrants of Chalcis (v. 1036).⁴⁶

I have reserved for this point discussion of two undoubted echoes of an earlier part of Thucydides’ work in the Mytilenaeen Debate, which might at first sight appear to weaken the case for an original independent presentation. Scholars have noted that Cleon actually uses arguments that had been employed earlier by Pericles in Book Two.⁴⁷ These echoes are undeniable. When Cleon claims that the power wielded by

⁴⁴ On the accusations of bribery made against Cleon in comedy see E.M.Carawan (1990, 137-47).

⁴⁵ Cf. Lucian, *Timon*, 30.

⁴⁶ For the identification with the tyrant cf. A. H. Sommerstein (1981, 199-200).

⁴⁷ Cf. 63 . 2-3 and IV 40; II 40.2-3 and 62.5; II 65.7 and III 38.2 . These parallels have been recognised by many scholars . See in particular Gomme (*HCT*, II. 311), M.H.B.Marshall (1984, 19-36), M. Tulli

Athens over her allies is a tyranny (III. 37) he is echoing Pericles' words in book II. 63.2. The point made by Cleon about those who would practise virtue far away from all dangers (III. 40.4) seems also to refer to the kinds of arguments employed earlier by Pericles (II. 63.2 where the same verb ἀνδραγαθίζομαι is used). Within the context of Thucydides' full text, this observation certainly suggests that Cleon's speech in the second debate on Mytilene contains elements that imply a comparison between him and Pericles.⁴⁸ It is arguable that the fact that Cleon's words so closely echo those pronounced by Pericles in the preceding book is notably more related to the art of Thucydides than to the oratory of Cleon. We could thus see Thucydides acting as a writer, who carefully chooses and arranges his material: he does not make Cleon explicitly articulate concepts that might be considered inconsistent with his person, instead he makes him employ arguments which are appropriate and in character, but which may be viewed unfavourably by the author's audience. It is arguable that the fact that Cleon's words so closely echo those pronounced by Pericles in the preceding book is more related to the art of Thucydides than to the oratory of Cleon. We could thus see Thucydides acting as a writer, who carefully chooses and arranges his material: he does not make Cleon explicitly articulate concepts that might be considered inconsistent with his person, instead he makes him employ arguments which are appropriate and in character, but which may be viewed unfavourably by the author's audience. It has been said that Cleon emerges from the comparison as an inferior copy of Pericles and this impression was surely not lost on Thucydides' original public.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Pericles' views would have been known to Cleon and the assembly, as we can see from the use of one of them, the comparison to a tyranny in the *Knights* (see above); and Cleon very probably used them in the actual deliberations on Mytilene. They would also be known to many members of any

(1980, 249-255), A. Andrewes (1962, 75) and J. McGlew (1996, 339-361, p.342). J. De Romilly (1963, 171) hypothesises that the slight divergence in the arguments put forward might have been caused by the different circumstances under which the speeches were written, the Mytilenean debate belonging to an earlier phase of composition. But her thesis does not seem to consider the fact that, on that interpretation, the echoes could be taken as evidence against a continuous composition of the whole work. See also H. Yunis (1991, 179-200) who considers the instructional rhetoric of Pericles as opposed to the non-instructional rhetoric of Cleon and Athenagoras.

⁴⁸ Cf. A. Andrewes (1962, 85) and H.D. Westlake (1968, 60 ff.).

⁴⁹ F. Cairns (1982, 203-4) notes a parallel between the echoes of Pericles in the speech pronounced at the Mytilenean debate by Cleon, and the echoes of Achilles' words (*Il.* I) by Thersites (*Iliad* II 225-42). According to Cairns in his portrayal of historical characters Thucydides refers to Homeric models: "Thucydides intended his readers to keep Thersites in mind when evaluating Cleon and wanted to associate Pericles with Achilles" (p.204).

audience of an earlier, independent presentation of the Mytilenaeen episode. Hence their appearance in Cleon's speech would also have resonances for that audience. Whether Thucydides naturally fell into similar phrasing in his use of these points in composing his version of both speeches or deliberately brought them into line when composing his present full text can only be guessed. It is arguable, however, that the intentional echoes of Pericles would be there for audiences of the Mytilenaeen episode on its own as well as for those hearing or reading the fuller work.

These considerations are not intended to suggest that Thucydides had any heavily ironic intention in the way he composes the arguments attributed to Cleon in his speech in the Mytilenaeen debate. My purpose is rather to show that certain concepts expressed effectively by Cleon in Thucydides' account could actually be viewed in a negative light by that part of Thucydides' intended audience that did not approve of his policy. I am not saying that the kind of audience Aristophanes might have had was identical with the audience Thucydides may have aimed at. It is perfectly clear, however, that there were some Athenians who did not agree with Cleon's policy. People who held that view might have enjoyed Aristophanes' satirical picture of Cleon and might also have taken a negative view of the speech attributed to him by Thucydides in the Mytilenaeen debate. At the same time, they might well have recognised the force of the kinds of arguments so effectively delivered by Cleon in Thucydides' account, and at the same time have seen that some of these were capable of being turned against him. The man who accuses others of corruption in Thucydides' account, seems to have been accused himself over the Mytilenaeen affair. The man who speaks with approval of the tyrannical role of Athens may well be seen by Thucydides' public as open to a charge of tyrannical behaviour himself. The man who lists a lack of education among the virtues of a citizen was in fact considered by some to be a bad politician precisely because he was lacking of sufficient culture and education for his public role. With further, undoubted, irony the speech Thucydides puts into his mouth is an example of the verbal dexterity early denounced at the beginning of his speech and exhibits that very quality in great measure. Thucydides does not make Cleon say anything inappropriate to the occasion or the man, but the way in which the speech is composed, leaves the audience free to take it in different ways. While doubtless some of the listeners accepted the kinds of arguments used by

Cleon in it, other more attentive members of Thucydides' public may have been able to spot an echo of arguments once used by Pericles. Some may have welcomed the resemblance, others may have seen the likeness of Pericles to Cleon as like that of Hyperion to a Satyr. That part of the audience who had a negative view of Cleon may also have considered some of the ideas expressed by Cleon in Thucydides' version as capable of being turned against him. We cannot now know how the speeches of the historical Cleon were heard by different groups of people, but one could well imagine that some people might already have seen a certain "dramatic irony" even in the real speeches delivered by him.⁵⁰ All considered, Thucydides' presentation of Cleon shows a variegated image suitable for many different nuances of interpretation among the members of a contemporary audience.

⁵⁰ Many different hypotheses have been advanced about the date of composition of the debate. Cf. A.Andrewes (1962, 76), J.De Romilly (1963, 171). Finley (1942, 59-60 and 172-74) has shown how well these speeches may be considered to be integrated into the context of the early years of the Peloponnesian War.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Plataean Trial

Thucydides: III 52-68

After his account of the Mytilenaeen debate, Thucydides recounts a meeting convened to decide the fate of the population of another small city, Plataea. In my discussion of the Mytilenaeen debate I have already drawn attention to the elements that may indicate an earlier separate composition and outlined my grounds for a hypothesis of original delivery. In this chapter I shall try to analyse the subsequent narrative concerning the trial of the Plataeans using the same sort of approach. As for the Mytilenaeen debate, I shall attempt to show that in this case, too, we can speak of a self-contained narrative and that there is good cause at any rate to speculate that the trial of the Plataeans may have been presented in an independent orally delivered performance.

Thucydides devotes a number of sections of his work to the Plataeans. At II 2-7 he describes how a small detachment of Thebans had succeeded in penetrating the city and had been killed by the Plataeans, who then sent an embassy to the Athenians. As a result the Athenians sent an herald of their own back to Plataea, and then they brought in food and took away the men unfit for combat together with the women and children. Later, at chapters 71-79, Thucydides describes Archidamus' expedition against Plataea and the reaction of the Plataeans who pleaded to be allowed to remain autonomous. They refuse to abandon their alliance with Athens, as is demanded of them by the Spartans, and Archidamus proceeds to besiege the city. In Book Three (22 ff.) Thucydides provides a vivid account of the successful escape under cover of darkness by 212 Plataeans who finally found refuge in Athens. The city comes back into focus from chapter 52 onwards when the events leading up to the surrender of the Plataeans for trial are recounted. The long siege has by now completely weakened their forces and there is nothing to feed the number of people still inside Plataea. When a further attack is made on the wall by the Spartans, the Plataeans are unable to resist. The Spartans send five judges to try them. Only one question is to be put to each Plataean, namely, whether he had performed any act in favour of Sparta during the present war. The representatives of the Plataeans obtain permission to make an

extended speech in their defence; on the ground that a simple answer such as is requested would not give them any chance of acquittal. They speak of their plea as μακρότερα (Thuc. III.52.5) and in fact it is the longest speech in Thucydides' whole work. A lengthy reply by the Thebans thus follows; and the account of the fall of Plataea ends at chapter 68.

THE SUBJECT

In order to investigate the possible performability of the section it seems proper to analyse the structure of the debate between the Plataeans and the Thebans.

The Plataeans' speech begins with a long *exordium* (III. 53-54.1). They confess that speaking might prove dangerous for them and argue that it is difficult to persuade their judges. They will take the opportunity to speak, although they suspect that the judges will not prove to be impartial. According to Aristotle (*Rhetoric* III.14.10) those who have the worse side employ *exordia*: "for it is better [for them] to dwell on anything else than the case itself". In order to refute aspersions it is good practice to have recourse to particular arguments, one of them being the complaint that the matter has been already decided (Ar. *Rhet.* III.15.8). Also, in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* it is said that in the course of the introduction the defendant must raise objections against the form of the trial, saying that it is being conducted unjustly and that his adversaries are at an advantage (*Rhet. ad Al.*, 1346 b). Thus, nothing the Plataeans say appears to be inconsistent with the requirements of a rhetorical opening in such circumstances.¹

The core of the speech of defence, the *narratio*, follows. In reply to the Spartans' question whether they have rendered any good service to the Lacaedaemonians and their allies in the present war, the Plataeans claim that they have not wronged the Spartans; it is the Spartans themselves who are at fault in

¹ S.Hornbower (1987, 47 ff.) notes similarities between Thucydides IV 17-20 and the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1425 a 36 ff.. Hornbower argues that because the *Rhetoric* dates from the fourth century, it is natural to assume that influence came from Thucydides to the author of that treatise, and not *vice versa* (p. 49).

having made war on them. The defendants recall the valour they showed during the Persian Wars at Artemisium and Plataea, where they stood side by side with the Spartans and Pausanias. They also brought aid to Sparta during the revolt of the Helots (III. 54). The active role played by the Plataeans during the Persian Wars against the barbarians and the honour conferred upon them by Pausanias and the Spartans at that time becomes a *leitmotif* of the Plataean's speech. This point recurs no less than four other times in the course of the *narratio* and it is intertwined with other arguments of defence.² In order to explain their conduct in the present war the speakers remind the judges that, when they originally sought an alliance with Sparta, the Spartans themselves suggested to the Plataeans that they should seek help from Athens, so that it would not be in accordance with justice to abandon the Athenians now. Moreover, the defendants make an attack on the Thebans, accusing them of having done the Plataeans many wrongs in the past and of beginning the present contest by attempting to seize the city of Plataea in time of peace and on a day of festival; so that the Plataeans had every right to repel them.³ The judges are asked to make their decision in accordance with justice instead of favouring the Thebans for the sake of expediency.

As we see, the motif of righteous conduct is at the core of the speech: it is used by the Plataeans both to justify their own behaviour and to make an appeal to the judges. As we found in the case of the introduction, the *narratio* also complies with the precepts given in later rhetorical handbooks. Among the proofs originating independently of art (ἄτεχνοι πίστεις, *Rhet.* I.15), which are an essential part of forensic oratory, Aristotle includes this: that if the actions in question are disadvantageous to the speaker, he should stress that the judge is "an arbiter of what is just, that he ought therefore to regard not the matter of the deed, but something partaking more of justice" (*Rhet.* I.15.23). Praise of past actions is one of the ways in

² Cf. Thuc. III 56.2, 57.3, 58.4, 58.5.

³ E.Badian (1993, 112 f.) notes that Thucydides "nowhere mentions the fact that the attack was timed to take place on a Plataean festival day" when he describes the attack on Plataea by the Thebans at II 22 ff.. When the point is made at III 56.2 it has the appearance of being there for rhetorical effect: the Plataeans recall it before the Spartan judges in order "to heighten the heinousness of the Theban offence". Thucydides must have known the fact from the beginning, but his freedom from the superstition of established belief, made him by-pass the event as unimportant. However, as Badian suggests, the fact was historically important: "for this timing gave the Thebans a good chance of finding the city unable to defend itself at short notice and of rounding up plenty of hostages outside the walls" (p. 112).

which the Plataeans “invest themselves with a certain kind of character” so as to dispose the hearer favourably (πίστις τῷ ἡθεὶ τοῦ λέγοντος, *Rhet.* II, 1, III, 16). An analogous idea is expressed in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*. The accused should mention: “any friendly feelings or cause for gratitude or compassion that already exist between him and the members of the assembly” (*Rhet. ad Al.*, 1436b). The Plataeans state their own innocence at the outset and subsequently confront objections. Such an order of exposition is advocated by Aristotle for both judicial and deliberative oratory (*Rhet.* III. 17.14). In order to structure a speech of defence if the adversary questions the fact, Aristotle advises the defendant to insist that: “it did no harm and to urge that the action is not of the importance supposed or that it was done justly” (Aristotle, *Rhet.* XVII, 1). A similar statement is found in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* (1427a). All these elements are constituent parts of the Plataeans’ speech.

In the conclusion (III. 59.3-4) the defendants point out that bringing a plea to an end is the hardest thing of all “seeing that with its ending their mortal peril also draws near” and recapitulate the main arguments of defence and the accusations they have made against the Thebans in the course of their speech. Such a summary satisfies the Aristotelian criteria for a *peroratio*: “getting the hearer favourable to themselves and ill disposed towards the adversary” (Aristotle, *Rhet.* III. 19).

According to Aristotle those who are vulnerable to accusation resort to introductions (*Rhet.* III.14). The Thebans, however, believe they have a strong case therefore they do not make a long appeal to the judges in the opening of their speech. Instead, they proceed to explain the reason why they chose to speak although they were not asked to (Thuc. III. 61.1); they need to answer the charges moved against them by the Plataeans and refute the Plataeans’ self-praise.

The *narratio* which follows questions the Plataeans’ arguments and aims to throw discredit on their past actions. Their enmity against the Plataeans has been caused by the behaviour of the Plataeans themselves; the only reason why they did not *medize* in the past was because the Athenians also did not, whereas the Thebans were not free to decide but were forced by their rulers to go over to the Persian side (Thuc., III. 61.2, 62.1-2). They, too, can boast of courage, such as they showed at Coronea for the freedom of Boeotia and *now* they are “zealously helping to liberate the other people” (Thuc. III.62.5). In other words, unlike the Plataeans, the Thebans are able to give a positive answer to the question formulated by the Spartan judges. To the

Plataeans' claim that their alliance with Athens was kept according to justice, the accusers reply that it was "far more dishonourable and wicked to betray to their destruction all the Hellenes" as they had done in helping the Athenians (Thuc., III. 63.3). Further emphasis is laid on these accusations through *amplificatio* (Aristotle, *Rhet.*, II 26): the same concepts are in fact repeated all through the next chapter (Thuc. III. 64). Finally, the Thebans deny having made an attack on Plataea in time of peace. They claim to have been invited by some citizens of Plataea and parody the words already used in self-defence by the Plataeans at 65.4: "it is those who lead that break the laws rather than those who follow" (Thuc., III. 65.3). A brief résumé of the charges moved against their adversaries is followed by the *peroratio* with an appeal to the judges to condemn them and not to be softened by their words (Thuc. III 67). Such a closure conforms to expectation. In a speech of accusation Aristotle advises that it is better not to move charges against the opponent at the beginning of the discourse, but to wait till the end so as to make an impression on the judges that is likely to last (Aristotle, *Rhet.* III. 14. 7). The banishment of pity counteracts the appeal to compassion made by the previous speaker, and is another stock motif of forensic oratory (Aristotle, *Rhet.* II. 9).

As we see, the Thebans' whole speech is articulated as a perfect ἀντιλογία in which the different accusations made by the Plataeans are countered. III 61-62 responds to III 54, 56; III 63.3, 64 to III 56.2 and III 65 to III 56.2. Talking of the task of the last person to speak, Aristotle points out that it is necessary for him:

δεῖ οὖν χώραν ποιεῖν ἐν τῷ ἀκροατῇ τῷ μέλλοντι λόγῳ· ἔσται δέ, ἂν ἀνέλῃς. διὸ ἢ πρὸς πάντα ἢ τὰ μέγιστα ἢ τὰ εὐδοκιμοῦντα ἢ τὰ εὐέλεγκτα μαχεσάμενον οὕτω τὰ αὐτοῦ πιστὰ ποιητέον.

"to gain a footing in the hearer's mind for the intended speech; and it will be gained if you sweep away objections. Thus a speaker, having combated either all, or the most important, or the most approved arguments of his adversary, or those which readily admit a contrary inference, is in this way to substantiate his own case." (Aristotle, *Rhet.* III, 17.15).

The *Rhetoric* and the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* were composed at a time when rhetorical speeches had been widely presented for a long time in the agora and the Athenian courts as well as on the tragic stage; and their authors were thus well placed

to frame rules, evaluate speeches, and quote examples. We have seen, however, that the Plataean debate as presented by Thucydides conforms to many of these rules. It is likely, however, that bodies of rules and rhetorical handbooks were already in existence and that these were being used for rhetorical teaching by Thucydides' own time.⁴ These aspects provide support for the hypothesis that the speeches in their present form were intended for oral delivery.⁵

Further evidence can be introduced in support of this hypothesis. It is well known that Dionysius of Halicarnassus in his book *On Thucydides* does not spare any criticism of the style of the historian as too difficult and complex. The only exception seems to be the Plataean speech:

ὑπὲρ ἀπάσας δὲ τὰς ἐν ταῖς ἑπτὰ βύβλοις φερομένας τὴν Πλαταιέων ἀπολογίαν τεθαύμακα παρ' οὐδὲν οὕτως ἕτερον ὥς τὸ μὴ βεβασανίσθαι μηδὲ κατεπιτετηδεῦσθαι, ἀληθεῖ δέ τινι καὶ φυσικῶ κεκοσμήσθαι χρώματι. τὰ τε γὰρ ἐνθυμήματα πάθους ἐστὶ μεστὰ καὶ ἡ λέξις οὐκ ἀποστρέφουσα τὰς ἀκοάς· ἡ τε γὰρ σύνθεσις εὐεπὴς καὶ τὰ σχήματα τῶν πραγμάτων ἴδια. ταῦτα δὴ τὰ Θουκυδίδου ζηλωτὰ ἔργα, καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων τὰ μιμήματα τοῖς ἱστοριογραφοῦσιν ὑποτίθεμαι λαμβάνειν.

"But more than the seven speeches presented in the seven books, I admire the defence of the Plataeans (III 53-59) and that for nothing so much as for the absence of distortion and excessive elaboration and the use of true and natural embellishments. The arguments (*enthymemata*) are presented with a great deal of feeling, and the language is not repulsive to the ear. For the composition is *euphonious* and the figures are appropriate to the matter. *These are the works of Thucydides that are worthy of emulation, and I advise the historians to draw their material for imitation from these.*" (*On Thuc*, 42).⁶

Again in *De Compositione Verborum* he selects a sentence (III. 57.4) from this speech as an illustration on how the pathos in a passage would be lost if the word order were

⁴ See G.A.Kennedy (1959, 169-178).

⁵ I have chosen to draw attention to how the two speeches harmonise with the rules of rhetoric rather than to focus on parallels with other contemporary examples of orations. This is because this kind of analysis seems to evidence the attention the writer paid to making this debate as a perfect specimen of judicial oratory. For further analysis of the relationship between this debate and *contemporary* orations see C. W. Macleod (1983, 103-122). On Thucydides' knowledge and use of Attic orators see M.Nouhaud (1982, 113-118). On parallels between Thucydides and Andocides see J.De Romilly (1956, 196). For Andocides see F.Decleva Caizzi (1969, in particular 11-83, and note at p. 17-18 for the relationship between Thucydides and Antiphon). More parallels between the styles of Thucydides and Antiphon are also offered by M.Gagarin (1997, 1-35, esp. pp. 16, 25-26, 30-33).

⁶ Translation from W.K..Pritchett (1975).

changed (*De Com. Verb.* 7.4). Dionysius tells us two important things: that the passage itself is worthy of imitation and that it is *suitable for akroasis*. This means that in his opinion it could have been delivered and *precisely because* the exposition of the subject is *euphonious*.⁷

Finally, J.C.Hogan has advanced the hypothesis of an interrelationship between the Plataeans' speech as reported by Thucydides and Euripides' *Hecuba*.⁸ Although it is arguable that some of Hogan's parallels are not supported by sufficient evidence drawn from the texts, a certain degree of similarity might be admitted. In both texts an attempt is made to evoke pity in the hope of swaying a decision, and arguments based on justice and the duty to respect suppliants are used to stir compassion. These parallels might be the result of an independent development of ideas, but what really matters is that the motifs touched on in the course of the Plataeans' speech would not be out of place if delivered by a tragic actor performing on the stage.

The Plataean trial in context: subject matter and influences

The fact that the Plataean trial conforms to the rules for composing forensic oratory as they are set forth in later rhetorical treatises does not in itself give us full assurance that the text could have been performed. The speeches delivered by Greek orators in fifth century Athens were pronounced in front of the assembly or the court and in both cases knowledge of the situation giving rise to the speech was shared by both the orator and his public. But, as for reported or reconstructed debates included in a work of history, we should imagine that, if they were ever performed separately, that would have happened at a time later than the event, perhaps quite some time later, and perhaps even in different geographical areas; and the historical setting in which the speeches took place would have had to be explained to the audience. The speeches would therefore have had to be set in the wider context of a self-explanatory section

⁷ Note that *euphonia* is one of the topics dear to Dionysius and is dealt with extensively in *De Compositione Verborum*. See also Demetrius *On Style* 68-70.

⁸ Cf. J.C.Hogan (1972, 241-257).

where details on the historical background were included. Our evidence for public readings from works of history in the fifth century almost exclusively concerns Herodotus, and the historian from Halicarnassus is therefore an important point of reference for our study on possible performances of parts of the work of Thucydides.⁹

Herodotean narrative is organised in λόγοι: self-standing units in which single events are likely to have been presented to an audience through a public reading. Studies of the structure of these sections have revealed that various episodes often share a common form of presentation.¹⁰ Introductory and concluding sentences frame the core of the narrative and mark off different episodes. One standard feature in the introduction is to give information about the time at which the events take place. Normally the end is marked with greater emphasis than the beginning. Summary expressions such as ταῦτα or τοιαῦτα occur at the end of almost every narrative, often accompanied by a brief recapitulation of the matter treated in the λόγος. S. Cagnazzi has also noted that the rounding-off sentence frequently repeats words employed at the beginning of the exposition, giving the narrative a circular form.¹¹ On some occasions a sentence of this kind has been used for a heightened tragic effect.¹² Assuming, then, that such features act as elements intended to facilitate and, on occasion, also to enhance the oral presentation of a piece, let us now turn to the presentation of the Plataean trial in Thucydides. The introductory words read:

Ὑπὸ δὲ τοὺς αὐτοὺς χρόνους τοῦ θέρους τούτου καὶ οἱ Πλαταιῆς οὐκέτι ἔχοντες σῖτον οὐδὲ δυνάμενοι πολιορκεῖσθαι ξυνέβησαν τοῖς Πελοποννησίοις τοιῶδε τρόπῳ.

“During this summer and about the same time, the Plataeans, who were now without food and could endure the siege no longer, surrendered to the Peloponnesians. It happened in the following manner”. (Thuc., III. 52.1)

⁹ Evidence for reading aloud of Herodotus is found in Dion.Chrysost. *Orat.* 37-103; Plut. *De Her. Mal.*, 26. Cf. also our discussion in the introductory chapter.

¹⁰ See in particular J.A. Evans (1991), T.Long (1987), H.R. Immerwahr (1966), G. Nagy (1987, 175-184), B. Hemmerdinger (1981, 170-174), J.A.K. Thompson (1935), D. Lateiner (1989). E. Powell (1939, 1-34) expresses the opposing view that the possibility of recitations can be left out of account.

¹¹ Cf. S.Cagnazzi (1975, 385-423).

¹² This practice dates back to Homer and presumably already followed earlier examples, now lost, of orally performed literary works. Note also what D. Lateiner (1989, 44) says: “These formulae of closure remind the reader of the author’s presence and power, his control of what the audience can hear or see. They appear when stories ought to end or accounts are sufficiently full in the author’s opinion”.

As we would expect at the beginning of a λόγος, a clear opening statement signals the subject the author is going to present: the surrender of Plataea and the terms agreed. A temporal expression locates the episode at a certain time: these happenings are said to be contemporary with Nikias' expedition against the isle of Minoa, dealt with in the preceding chapter. Although a reference to previous narrative might seem at odds with an original exposition, we should notice that Herodotus often connects two successive λόγοι establishing temporal links between different episodes. S.Cagnazzi argues that reference to previously recounted episodes appears to be employed at the beginning of a new exposition together with the particles δὲ and καὶ which function as connective features between the different parts of the work. These elements were probably included at the time when the various accounts were finally linked together.¹³ We could argue that a parallel use of δέ and καί as to create a temporal connection with the preceding narrative was similarly used by Thucydides in order to incorporate the Plataean trial into the context of Book Three. However, we should, of course, also remember that this is only a specialised application of a use of a technique of marking off and linking pieces of work which goes back to Homer and is regularly used within larger units that could have been regularly performed *in toto*. Finally, the introduction ends with the expression τοιῷδε τρόπῳ, one which is frequently employed by Herodotus when presenting a new exposition. It is also worth mentioning the closure of this narrative:

Καὶ τὰ μὲν κατὰ Πλάταιαν ἔτει τρίτῳ καὶ ἑνενηκοστῷ ἐπειδὴ Ἀθηναίων ξύμμαχοι ἐγένοντο οὕτως ἐτελεύτησεν.

“Such was the fate of Plataea, in the ninety-third year after they became allies of Athens” (Thuc. III. 68.5)

The sentence clearly has a conclusive character. Just as ταῦτα or τοιαῦτα in Herodotus, τὰ μὲν and οὕτως function as summarising expressions. But in this particular example the sentence performs another function as well: it concludes the narrative concerning Plataea in a strikingly solemn way. Thucydides does not just say that Plataea has been destroyed, but that such a destruction has been visited upon a

¹³ Cf. S.Cagnazzi (1975, 387-388), see also G.De Sanctis (1951, 21-45) and G.Nagy (1987, 175-184) for the autonomy and subsequent integration of the Herodotean λόγοι in the context of the overall work.

city which originally was an ally of Athens so as to direct criticism at the Athenian failure to intervene.

Having indicated the possibility that these two sentences form the beginning and the end of a self-contained exposition, I turn to the analysis of the exposition itself. We have already discussed the rhetorical structure of the two speeches reported, which constitute the core of the account. We should now direct our attention to the surrounding narrative and to the arguments employed by the opposing parties during the trial. After the introductory statement Thucydides explains that the Plataeans were unable to repel the assault made on their wall and the Spartan commander observed their weakness. It follows the surprising statement that Sparta had decided not to take Plataea by storm, and that the reason for this was political:

Εἰρημένον γὰρ ἦν αὐτῷ ἐκ Λακεδαιμόνος, ὅπως, εἰ σπονδαὶ γίγνοιτό ποτε πρὸς Αθηναίους καὶ ξυγχωροῖεν ὅσα πολέμῳ χωρία ἔχουσιν ἑκάτεροι ἀποδίδοσθαι, μὴ ἀνάδοτος εἴη ἡ Πλάταια ὥς αὐτῶν ἐκόντων προσχωρησάντων

“[...] if ever a treaty of peace should be made with the Athenians and the Lacedaemonians should consent that all the places each had taken in war should be given back, Plataea might not have to be given up, on the ground that its inhabitants had gone over to Sparta voluntarily” (Thuc. III. 52.2)

The real reason lies therefore with Spartan national interest, not with any feelings of compassion on the part of the Spartans towards the Plataeans. This leads in turn to the decision to send five Spartan judges to Plataea. It is important at this point to look back to earlier sources of information in order to gain a clearer picture of the complicated relationships between Plataea, Sparta and Athens. Again, most of the evidence comes to us from Herodotus.¹⁴ In book VI 108 a case analogous to the present one is related. Plataea, being hard pressed by the Thebans, had asked Sparta for help. Herodotus reports that the Spartans refused to intervene in their favour, but

¹⁴ The interrelationship between Herodotus and Thucydides has been considered from different points of view. There is an analysis of some topics in war debated in Homer, Herodotus and Thucydides in K.J.Latham (1981, 54-67). Rosanelli (1930, 115-141, 151-170) accepts the idea that Thucydides knows and completes the work of Herodotus. For a recent study of this subject see S.Hornblower (1992, 141-154), who analyses various passages that exhibit a parallel between the works of the two authors.

the reason they adduced was not the real one. Their decision arose from considerations of private interest: ὥς βουλόμενοι τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἔχειν πόνους συνεστεῶτας Βοιωτοῖσι “they desired that the Athenians should bring trouble on themselves by making enemies of the Boeotians” (Hdt. VI 108). Although the situation is not identical, in both texts Plataea plays the role of the victim (attacked by the Spartans in one case, by the Thebans in the other) and the Spartans react in duplicitous fashion. We should notice that, Thucydides not only seems to share Herodotus’ negative view of the Spartans’ motives but also expresses it in a similar way, laying stress on the gap existing between the real motivation and the formal answer given by the Lacedaemonians. Scholars often say that the great innovation Thucydides brought to the idea of history is the notion of investigating the true cause underlying the events, but in fact, a mental process of the same kind is already visible in this portion of Herodotus. This information is important for an understanding of the way in which Sparta handles the situation. Five judges come to Plataea, but they do not put the Plataeans on a formal trial; instead, they ask each one a single question: whether he had rendered any good service to the Lacedaemonians and their allies in the present war. A formal trial would probably have entailed the requirement of a fair consideration of the matter, while this simple question which the Spartans know the Plataeans are unable to answer in the affirmative, enables them to take Plataea under a show of correctness.

The interrelationship between these passages in Herodotus and Thucydides stands out even more clearly when we look at the words used by the Spartans to deny their support to Plataea in Herodotus:

Ἡμεῖς μὲν ἐκαστέρῳ τε οἰκέομεν, καὶ ὑμῖν τοιήδε τις γίνοιτ’ ἂν ἐπικουρίῃ ψυχρή· φθαίητε γὰρ ἂν πολλάκις ἐξανδραποδισθέντες ἢ τινα πυθέσθαι ἡμέων. Συμβουλευόμεν δὲ ὑμῖν δοῦναι ὑμέας αὐτοὺς Ἀθηναίοισι, πλησιοχώροισι τε ἀνδράσι καὶ τιμωρέειν ἐοῦσι οὐ κακοῖσι.

“We dwell afar off, and such aid as ours would be found but cold comfort to you; for you might be enslaved many times over ere any of us heard of it. We counsel you to put yourselves in the protection of the Athenians, who are your neighbours, and can defend you right well” (Hdt. VI.108).¹⁵

¹⁵ Translations from Herodotus are from A.D.Godley, (1982).

In Thucydides the Plataeans use very similar words in an argument in their defence:

Δεομένων γὰρ ξυμμαχίας ὅτε Θηβαῖοι ἡμᾶς ἐβιάσαντο, ὑμεῖς ἀπεώσασθε καὶ πρὸς Αθηναίους ἐκελεύετε τραπέσθαι ὡς ἐγγὺς ὄντας, ὑμῶν δὲ μακρὰν ἀποικούντων.

“For when the Thebans oppressed us and we sought alliance with you, you rebuffed us and bade us apply to the Athenians, because they were near, whereas you lived far away” (Thuc. III 55.1).

It is almost as if they were paraphrasing the words spoken by Cleomenes in Herodotus.¹⁶

Other cross-references between the Plataean trial and Herodotus’ work can be found. We have already observed that the defendants make a virtue of their conduct in the past, during the Persian Wars. These are the words they use:

Τὰ δ’ ἐν τῇ εἰρήνῃ καὶ πρὸς τὸν Μῆδον ἀγαθοὶ γεγενήμεθα, τὴν μὲν οὐ λύσαντες νῦν πρότεροι, τῷ δὲ ξυνεπιθέμενοι τότε ἐς ἐλευθερίαν τῆς Ἑλλάδος μόνοι Βοιωτῶν. καὶ γὰρ ἡπειρώταί τε ὄντες ἐναυμαχήσαμεν ἐπ’ Ἀρτεμισίῳ, μάχῃ τε τῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ γῇ γενομένη παρεγενόμεθα ὑμῖν τε καὶ Πausanias· εἰ τέ τι ἄλλο κατ’ ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον ἐγένετο ἐπικίνδυνον τοῖς Ἑλλησι, πάντων παρὰ δύναμιν μετέσχομεν.

“But in the war against the Persians and during the peace which followed we have proved ourselves good and true men; we have not now been the first to break the peace, and then we were the only Boeotians who rallied to defend the freedom of Hellas. For though we are an inland people, we took part in the sea-fight at Artemisium; in the battle that was fought here in our own land we stood side by side with you and Pausanias; and whatever perils arose to threaten the Hellenes in those days, we bore our part in them all beyond our strength.” (Thuc. III. 54.2)

The argument that the Plataeans were the only who did not *medise* is repeated both in Hdt. VII 132 and VIII 66.¹⁷ The difference is that Herodotus names the Thespians on both occasions as well as the Plataeans, while in Thucydides mention of the Thespians is omitted. It is arguable that this is for the good reason that a speech of defence

¹⁶ Compare also S. Hornblower (1992, 148).

¹⁷ S. Hornblower (1992, 148-9) notes that the claim that if Plataea did not side with the Persians, that was only because Athens did not, suggests Herodotus 8.30 on why the Phocians did not *medise* (hatred of Thessaly). For the problem of people going over to the Persians during the Persian Wars see J. Wolsky (1973, 3-15), J. L. Myres (1936, 97-105) and D. F. Graf (1984, 15-30).

requires that emphasis should be laid on the arguments directly relevant to the case without spreading any of the credit to others. The courageous part the Plataeans played at Artemisium without any experience of seamanship is in Herodotus VIII.1 (ἄπειροι τῆς ναυτικῆς ἔόντες). In general terms we may say that appreciation of the valour the Plataeans had shown during the earlier wars is present in both Herodotus and Thucydides. In the course of the trial this is the core of the Plataeans' defence, but it is also found in Hdt. VII 132, where the Plataeans are said to have joined the Hellenes voluntarily (μὴ ἀναγκασθέντες) or Hdt. VIII.1 where their προθυμία is praised.¹⁸

Motifs from Herodotus' account of the Battle of Plataea are also repeated in the speech of defence: the idea that the Greeks were fighting to decide whether Greece should be free or enslaved (Thuc. III 54.2, Hdt. IX 60), mention of the valour shown on that occasion by the Plataeans (Thuc. III 56.57, Hdt. IX 71), the tripod dedicated by Pausanias at Delphi after the battle (Thuc. III 57.3, Hdt. IX 81), and the decision to bury the fallen Spartans at Plataea (Thuc. III 58.5, Hdt. IX 85). These are, of course, motifs which belonged to the propaganda spread by the victors when the war was over and which Herodotus was not the only author to reflect. Recently, scholars have drawn attention to a new fragment of Simonides discovered in P.Oxy 3965, an encomiastic narrative elegy in celebration of the battle of Plataea. One of the theories is that it was composed at a time soon after the battle, perhaps to be performed during a public festival. According to D. Boedeker the text was probably re-performed and Herodotus could have been influenced by it in composing his own account of Plataea.¹⁹ A. Aloni²⁰ hypothesises that the poem may have been commissioned from Simonides by the Spartans in celebration of their victory at Plataea, and E. Stehle²¹ also accepts that Sparta has a prominent role in the elegy. This point is of particular interest if we compare the new Simonides with a passage of *Pythian* I in which Pindar treats "the battle [fought] before Kithairon", that is Plataea, as a Spartan achievement suitable for praise in Sparta in the same way as he would win the Athenians' favour with praise of Salamis (*Pyth.* I.v.77). There thus seems to have been an established tradition giving the Spartans the credit of defeating the

¹⁸ For the use of the word προθυμία referred to the Plataeans in Thucydides cf. III 55.3, 56.5.

¹⁹ Cf. D. Boedeker (1996, 223-242) and also (1995, 217-229).

²⁰ Cf. A. Aloni (1994, 9-22).

²¹ Cf. E. Stehle (1996, 205-222).

Medes at Plataea, a tradition also shared by Herodotus who writes: “Among the Greeks, the Tegeans and Athenians bore themselves gallantly, but the Lacedaemonians excelled all in valour”(Hdt. IX 71). The fact that Plataea was considered a Spartan victory could explain the prominence given to this battle and to Pausanias in Thucydides. For the accused, the memory of Plataea is a suitable topic of defence, a concealed way of including indirect praise of the judges’ own country.

Further parallels between the Plataean trial and Herodotus concern the Thebans. In their speech of defence the Plataeans strongly condemn the pro-Persian attitude shown by the Thebans during the Persian Wars.

Καίτοι εἰ νῦν ὑμῖν ὠφέλιμοι δοκοῦσιν εἶναι, πολὺ καὶ ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι Ἕλληνες μᾶλλον τότε ὅτε ἐν μείζονι κινδύνῳ ἦτε. Νῦν μὲν γὰρ ἑτέροις ὑμεῖς ἐπέρχεσθε δεινοί, ἐν ἐκείνῳ δὲ τῷ καιρῷ, ὅτε πᾶσι δουλείαν ἐπέφερεν ὁ βάρβαρος, οἶδε μετ’ αὐτοῦ ἦσαν.

“And yet if the Thebans seem serviceable to you now, we and the rest of the Hellenes were of far greater service to you when you were in greater danger. For now you are attacking others and are a menace to them, but in that crisis, when the barbarian was threatening us all with slavery, these men were on his side.” (Thuc. III. 56.4)

Herodotus consistently refers to the Thebans as those who were with the Medes during that war (Hdt. VII 205, IX 40, IX 67)²², and his criticism is explicitly stated when he speaks of the Thermophylae:

“As for the Thebans, whose general was Leontiades, they were for a while with the Greeks and constrained by necessity to fight against the king’s army; but as soon as they saw the Persians gaining the upper hand, then, when the Greeks with Leonidas were pressing towards the hillock, the Thebans separated from them and drew nigh to the foreigners, holding out their hands and crying that they were the Persians’ men (μηδίζουσι) and had been among the first to give earth and water to the king; it was under constraint (ὑπὸ δὲ ἀναγκάῃς) - they said - that they had come to Thermophylae, and they were guiltless (ἀναίτιοι) of the harm done to the king; which was the truest word ever spoken (ἀληθέστατον τῶν λόγων); so that by this plea they saved their lives, the Thessalians being there to bear witness to what they said.” (Hdt. VII 233)

²² According to J.A.S.Evans (1991, 92) Herodotus makes no attempt to palliate the *medism* of Thebes during the Persian Wars.

The Plataeans' condemnation of the Thebans' conduct during the Persian Wars is thus consistent with Herodotus. Apart from the fact that the coincidence strengthens the interrelationship between the Plataean trial and Herodotus, it is also possible to argue that in the conduct of their defence the defendants themselves make accusations which were not unsupported by external evidence. This repeated condemnation of the Thebans was presumably equally part of the background information that Thucydides' public shared. That means, that the Plataeans plead on the basis of arguments which at the time of the Peloponnesian War might still be adduced in order to establish favourable ground for a speech of defence. The possibility that the Plataeans might be believed by the judges is rather so strong that, for this very reason, the Thebans ask permission to speak (Thuc. III. 61.1). In this attempt to defend themselves against the specific charge of μηδίζειν at Plataea they put forward a counter-argument:

Καὶ ἡ ξύμπασα πόλις οὐκ αὐτοκράτωρ οὔσα ἑαυτῆς τοῦτ' ἐπραξεν, οὐδ' ἄξιον αὐτῇ ὀνειδίσαι ὧν μὴ μετὰ νόμων ἥμαρτεν.

"The city as a whole was not in control of its own actions when Thebes took the course it did, nor is it fair to reproach it for the mistakes it made when not under the rule of law." (Thuc. III. 62.4)

In this case the connection with what is said in Herodotus is double-sided. In his Plataean logos Herodotus does say that the Thebans favoured the Persians on that occasion, but he also says that when the fight was over the Greeks marched against Thebes and demanded the surrender of "those who had taken the Persian part" (αὐτῶν τοὺς μηδίσαντας, Hdt. IX 86); and that implies an assumption on the Greeks' part, that some members of the population did not share the same political view.²³ But as regards this subject the interrelationship between our text and Herodotus ends here. In the following lines of the Plataean logos, in fact, it is explained that the Thebans refused to comply with the Greeks' demand and Thebes was besieged. Subsequently the Thebans agreed to hand over some of the men, but one of them, Attaginus, escaped out of the town and the rest who had been "confident that they would defeat the impeachment by bribery" were put to death by Pausanias

²³ S.Hornblower (1992, 149) notes that there is no statement in Herodotus or anywhere else that Thebes during the Persian Wars "was not governed by an isonomous oligarchy": "I wonder if it is not a fiction" he concludes, "conditioned by the rhetorical need of the Theban speaker to say 'non sum qualis eram'."

(Hdt. IX 87-88). If that was the real outcome of the matter, we can see why the Thebans might not have wanted to recall that episode in support of their defence, as in fact they did not.²⁴ In conclusion, we could say that many of the arguments related to past history raised in the course of the trial are consistent with information provided by Herodotus. Certainly, it is possible that Thucydides did know of these events independently from Herodotus' text, however he seems to fall into Herodotean schemes of presentation when recounting these matters.²⁵ Moreover, historical reality must have involved even more factors that could have been mentioned in connection with the conduct of the two parties during the Persian Wars, but we do not learn any of them from Thucydides. The later historian does not tell us anything more than what his predecessor had already said on the subject and if we consider how many problems the interpretation of historical events normally raises, this fact is in itself astonishing.

It is natural that the two opposing parties should choose arguments supporting their own cases. However, the question arises as to who made that choice. Was it purely and simply what had actually been said, or was it Thucydides; and, if the latter, then how far, if at all, was he drawing on his own record or memory of what had been actually said?²⁶ The question is a legitimate one here, when we consider that, apart from Thucydides, evidence for a trial having taken place at Plataea at the end of the siege is quite scanty. The fall of Plataea features in the fourth century speech *Against Neaera*.²⁷ Although mention is made of the siege the Spartans laid to the city, the double wall they built and the successful escape that some of the Plataeans achieved by climbing over the city's fortification, unseen by the enemy and in a night with rain

²⁴ It is worth remembering what Hornblower (1992, 150) says in his article on Thucydides' use of Herodotus: "My concluding suggestion is that, in speeches, where Thucydides was making a huge creative effort of a special sort, he was content to take his facts on trust from Herodotus, or to let his 'audience' do so, to an exceptional extent".

²⁵ Remember what we have already said about the use made by Thucydides of Herodotean schemes in the first chapter as regards the letter sent by Pausanians to Xerxes.

²⁶ We might remember what Gomme (*HCT*, II. 346) writes at the end of his commentary on the trial: "If Thucydides asked - What did they say? The answer may have been, 'only the usual things, the Persian Wars, the gods and the oaths, the special sanctity of Plataea, the honour of Sparta; but it was very honourably done' and in that event he clothed it in the language that we have, and made it of such and such a length, because he wanted it for his purpose".

²⁷ The speech is believed to have been composed between 373 and 339 BC. See the introductory note in A.T.Murray (1939, 349).

and heavy wind²⁸, the following description of the fall of Plataea does not include any reference to a trial. The text reads:

οἱ δ' ὑπομείναντες αὐτῶν ἀλούσης τῆς πόλεως κατὰ κράτος
ἀπεσφάγησαν πάντες οἱ ἡβῶντες, παῖδες δὲ καὶ γυναῖκες
ἐξηνδραποδίσθησαν, ὅσοι μὴ αἰσθόμενοι ἐπιόντας τοὺς
Λακεδαιμονίους ὑπεξῆλθον Αθῆνας.

“As for those who remained behind, when the city was taken by storm, all who had reached manhood were killed and the women and children were made slaves all, that is, save those who, when they saw the Lacaedaemonians advancing, got away secretly to Athens” (*Against Neaera* 103).

The initial intention of the Spartans not to take the city by storm, but to induce a voluntary surrender of the Plataeans, the subsequent arrival of judges from Sparta and the trial are not noted.²⁹ A similar consideration might be drawn from Isocrates' *Panathenaicus*. Although the text, as we will see later on, might reflect some Thucydidean influence, no mention is made of a trial as regards the Plataeans. Another source of information for the fall of Plataea is Diodorus Siculus. Diodorus does refer to κατηγορίαι made against the Plataeans by the Spartans (in this case there are two questions, not a single one as in Thucydides)³⁰, but he does not mention a consequent debate where opposing speakers confront each other.

Even in Thucydides, where the episode of the fall of Plataea is centred on the trial, some inconsistencies are noticeable. Gomme notes that although in chapter 52.5 the author mentions two Plataean speakers, we then have just one speech and no reference is made to arguments raised by two orators from this side. The same could be said as regards the opposing part: the name of the Theban speaker is not given in the text, but the only speech which is reported from this side is attributed to “the Thebans” without further indications.³¹

²⁸ All this is in Thucydides. See Thuc. II 20-24.

²⁹ Such an omission is even more interesting when we consider that the text seems to be along similar lines to Thucydides' account as regards the escape from Plataea and the tripod dedicated after the battle of Plataea (Ps.Dem. *Ag. Neaera*, 95).

³⁰ But cf. A.W.Spratt (1896, at 68) who assumes that when speaking of a twofold question Diodorus is referring to Thuc. III 52.4.

³¹ But note that the case is not unique in Thucydides. Compare the beginning of the Melian Dialogue and our discussion *ad loc.*

One could argue that there was a trial but that, as the speeches did not bring about a change of attitude among the judges, there was no historical reason to refer to them and that is why neither the author of *Against Neaera* nor Diodorus mention the trial.³² Why, then, does Thucydides choose *not* to ignore it? Why does our scientific historian not only consider it necessary to give an account of what both the parties had said on that occasion but even to make the Plataeans' speech the longest one included in his whole work, if whatever was said did not have any influence and the punishment was already decided? One possible explanation is that an artistic consideration might have prevailed: this arrangement creates a tragic flavour. At the end of Euripides' *Hecuba* (v.1109 ff.) we find a debate between Polymestor and Agamemnon. At this point Hecuba has already murdered Polymestor's sons and blinded their father; the explanations given by Polymestor about his past behaviour do not serve to change the situation, but their inclusion gives the play a moving ending.³³

Another artistic reason is detectable when we look at the relationship between the Plataean trial and the preceding debate on the fate of Mytilene. In the previous chapter we saw that Thucydides reports the speeches delivered in the second debate by Cleon and Diodotos when the moderate view of the latter speaker won over the assembly. The subject is very similar to that of the Plataean trial: in both cases a decision must be taken which will drastically affect the future of a city now helpless. Arguments based on the idea of justice and utility (τὸ σὺμφερον) are developed in the two speeches delivered. The dominant power is also responsible for reaching a final resolution on both the issues. From the structural point of view the similarities are even more straightforward. In one of the appendices to his book on Thucydides, Connor shows that verbal parallels can be traced between the two texts.³⁴ At III 27.1 the fall of Mytilene is introduced by the expression ἀναγκάζονται ξυμβαίνειν and ξυνέβησαν is the verb used at chapter 52.1 describing the surrender of Plataea. An antilogy follows in both cases and the subsequent narrative

³² M.Cogan (1981a, 53-67) believes that the inclusion of the debate is surprising for several reasons: "1) The fall of Plataea was itself of minor military importance.[...] 2) The execution of all the Plataean prisoners was hardly an affair of the magnitude that it might appear from Thucydides' treatment of it in the history. 3) The political situation itself obscures the point of recording the speeches." (p.66)

³³ H.Lloyd-Jones (1971, 144) writes: "Thucydides sees the history of the Empire in tragic terms, not necessarily because he has been influenced by tragedy, but more probably because like the tragedians, like Herodotus, like most of his contemporaries his mind was profoundly conditioned by the epic and the whole attitude to human life which it expresses".

³⁴ Cf. W.R.Connor (1984, 255-56).

recording the outcome of the situation sounds very similar. τοὺς δ' ἄλλους ἄνδρας... διέφθειραν says Thucydides at chapter 50.1 regarding the fate of the Mytileneans and he subsequently adds in the same chapter: ὕστερον δὲ... κλήρους δὲ ποιήσαντες τῆς γῆς... κληρούχους... ἀπέπεμψαν. At chapter 68 the same verb has been used to describe the killing of the Plataeans διέφθειραν, and the decision taken on the disposal of the land follows in the same way: ὕστερον δὲ... τὴν δὲ γῆν... ἀπεμίσθωσαν (III 68. 3). Both the narratives are closed by a “rounding off sentence” (3.50.3 τὰ μὲν κατὰ Λέσβον / 3.68.5 καὶ τὰ μὲν κατὰ Πλάταιαν...). How are these evident parallels to be explained? Does this similarity in context and structure serve some particular purpose or is it fortuitous?

It is arguable that Thucydides deliberately constructs a parallel structure for the Mytilenean and Plataean debates and that his aim is to point out something related to the overall idea of his work. We have seen that in the speeches delivered in the second Athenian assembly Cleon repeatedly warns against appeals to pity: the power of persuasion is dangerous, it is said, because it leads to compassion, a virtue that an empire cannot afford to exercise (III. 40.2). Because the first speaker has already disposed the audience to disregard persuasive speeches, Diodotos' reply also avoids making any appeal to the compassion of the audience. In spite of such a rational exposition his opinion gains the favour of the assembly and the people of Mytilene are saved from total destruction. The Plataean trial introduces an opposite case. The citizens themselves pronounce one of the most moving speeches in the *History*; their oration is so powerful that, Thucydides says, the Thebans decide at once to speak: δείσαντες πρὸς τὸν λόγον αὐτῶν μὴ οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοί τι ἐνδῶσι “fearing that the Lacaedaemonians might be so moved by their plea as to yield somewhat” (III 60.1). But, in fact, the Spartans are not moved at all. We have seen that their position at the end of the debate is exactly the same as it was at the beginning. Thucydides writes the narrative that follows the speeches in such a way as to convey the absence of any reaction to the Plataean speech by the Spartan side. He says that the judges again put forward the same question they had already asked at the beginning: if the Plataeans were responsible for some benefit towards Sparta during the present war. Thucydides makes the judges repeat the same question twice in the course of the same chapter, and it is arguable that this has been done on purpose. The author wants to stress in this way how the powerful oratory of the Plataeans, an oratory so appealing

that even the Thebans are forced to put forward a reply, did not have any effect at all on the judges. The potential reader or hearer expects that some kind of reaction will follow the speeches, so that the simple restatement of the original question is a most effective way of showing the absence of any kind of involvement by the judges in the situation. It is natural to wonder whether an exposition of this kind might have the function of emphasising the different behaviour of Athens and Sparta as imperial powers.³⁵ On the one hand, after a calm exposition of the subject, the Athenians are brought to reconsider their first decision and are eager to send to Mytilene a second embassy to avoid the execution of the population. On the other hand, one of the most powerful examples of persuasive oratory in Thucydides does not have any effect on the Spartans and Plataea is destined to be destroyed. The comparison becomes even more interesting if we remember that Mytilene had in fact committed an act of revolt to the detriment of Athens, while Plataea merely declared neutrality during the war. It is thus possible that Thucydides wanted his public to interpret the Plataean trial in this way and that one of the reasons why he actually composed such a persuasive speech for the Plataeans is precisely to show how this kind of oratory would have been ineffective when addressed to Spartans. As we have seen in the previous chapter in the case of the echoes of Pericles' speech in Cleon's speech at Mytilene, the various links and juxtapositions between two sections, the Mytilenaeen Debate and the Plataean Trial, could be related to the time when the historian worked to connect together the single accounts. But it is also possible that public readings from the work were offered to the same public at different times and that would also give Thucydides the possibility to communicate to his audience, through consecutive performances, the contrasting attitudes of the two parties involved in the war.

Some final considerations may be advanced. We must remember that in the ancient Greek society persuasion is often seen as the opposite of violence and as the basis of civilisation. In his book on *Persuasion in the Greek Theatre* Buxton argues that the literary sources confirm the presence of a basic opposition between *πείθω* and *βίβα* in Greece.³⁶ In Isocrates and Plato persuasion often characterises a civilised society. More explicitly, Xenophon in the *Memorabilia* (1.2.40) says that: "It is not the part of those who cultivate the intellect to use violence; for to adopt such a course

³⁵ Cf. also Gomme (*HCT*, II. 354-355).

³⁶ R.G.Buxton (1982, 58-63).

belongs to those who possess brute force without intellect". The conclusion Buxton draws from this evidence is that it is possible to postulate an equation in which the civilised world is connected with *peitho* and the barbarians are connected with violence. If we may regard this as the view of Greeks in general, the question arises whether a potential public of the historian was not at least negatively impressed by the absence of any reaction shown by the Spartans judges to the Plataeans' appeal. The judges behaved as "an intolerant and domineering majority", as Buxton would say³⁷, an attitude contrary to the behaviour expected from a civilised society. Secondly, the negative judgement on the behaviour of Sparta towards the Plataeans that Isocrates expresses in the *Panathenaicus* seems to be very much indebted to the influence of Thucydides' narrative. His account of the facts follows the text of Thucydides. As the Plataeans do in their own speech, Isocrates recalls the Plataeans' role during the Persian Wars: these citizens had offered sacrifices to the deities worshipped by the Lacedaemonians and μόνοι Βοιωτῶν (as in Thuc. III. 54) had put their lives at stake not only for the freedom of the Hellenes (ἡλευθερώσαμεν τῶν Ελλήνων), but also for those who were compelled to be on the side of the Persians .

οὓς οὐ πολὺν χρόνον διαλιπόντες Λακεδαιμόνιοι, χαριζόμενοι Θηβαίοις, ἐκπολιορκήσαντες ἅπαντας ἀπέκτειναν πλὴν τῶν ἀποδρᾶναι δυνηθέντων.

"And yet" Isocrates concludes, "after no great interval of time, the Lacedaemonians to gratify Thebes [consideration often put forward in Thucydides], reduced the Plataeans by siege and put them all to the sword with the exception of those who had been able to escape through their lines "(92). (Compare the vivid picture of this escape in Thuc. III 20-24).

Isocrates proceeds to a comparison with the policy adopted by Athens towards her allies, and says: περὶ οὓς ἡ πόλις ἡμῶν οὐδὲν ὁμοία γέγονεν ἐκείνοις "Little did Athens resemble Sparta in the treatment of these people"(94). If it is possible that Isocrates' judgement of the role of Sparta in the Plataean trial is influenced by reading Thucydides, this means that the Plataean debate in the *History* does communicate a negative effect.

³⁷ R.G.Buxton (1982, 59).

I should like to advance a last consideration. If Thucydides aimed to create a negative impression among his intended audience, we could say that the narrative has been organised in this way *precisely because* the main intention of the historian was to create such an effect. But this hypothesis raises the problem of the historical reliability of the history itself. The problem, as we can see, is similar to the question of the potential artistic aims of Thucydides when composing the trial which we raised earlier in this chapter. If, as one might object, Thucydides has deliberately made the Plataeans deliver such a moving speech in order to show the cold reaction of the Spartans to these kinds of appeals, to what extent can the text of the historian be considered reliable from a historical point of view? Ought Thucydides' account of the trial still be considered as a source of evidence for a modern historian?

It seems to me that the arguments used by the Plataeans in Thucydides are consistent with the kinds of topics likely to have been covered during their actual speech and they are appropriate to the occasion, but the way in which the oration has been organised and the emphasis that has been given to certain elements comes from the way in which the historian deals with the subject.

There is a further consideration in favour of this interpretation. When we read all the references to Plataea in the work, we find that this speech in Book Three is simply a lengthy exposition, in direct form, repeating all the topics already covered in the plea to Archidamus in Book Two. That earlier speech is very brief, but it includes Pausanias, the help the Plataeans gave in the war against Persia, the Panhellenic sacrifices conducted in Plataean territory and the promise Sparta thus made to them regarding their security; and concludes with a plea to the Spartans not to reduce them to servitude just for the sake of Thebes. These same arguments, as we have seen, are the heart of the speech the Plataeans make in Book Three. The main difference is in length: what is expounded in a short form in Book Two, becomes a very long discourse in Book Three. Why did Thucydides choose to present a speech from the Plataean trial which is a close parallel to an earlier speech? The explanation probably lies in a decision to press all appropriate topics into service in order to create a very persuasive speech. However, an alternative explanation is also possible. If the section on the Plataean Trial was originally an autonomous self-contained narrative unit, the possibility of creating repetitions within a surrounding context did not exist at that time. Only the reader of a continuous text might, in fact, be able to assess the

presence of parallelisms between different sections of the full work. These repetitions would have been created at the time when Thucydides decided to connect the Plataean trial section to the rest of his continuous narrative. Whether the historian was unconcerned about the resultant inconsistency is a question that has to remain open.

CHAPTER SIX

The Corcyrean stasis Thuc. III 70-84

Thucydides' account of the stasis in Corcyra is the third of the three major narrative sections making up Book Three, the others being those on the Mytilenaeen Debate and the Trial of the Plataeans. Those two narratives have already been analysed in earlier chapters, where the hypothesis was advanced that they could be regarded as capable of functioning as two self-contained reports suitable for separate performance or publication. While the Mytilenaeen debate might be considered as a dramatic account in which Thucydides shares with the tragedians the ability to organise his material with a view to creating false expectations and dramatic tension, the Plataean Trial shows a historian vying with the orators and attempting to write an exemplary piece of oratory.¹ In the latter case Thucydides has succeeded so well that many later readers took the Plataeans' speech of defence as a perfect specimen of the genre. We have tried to show that Thucydides gives the impression of having composed the Mytilenaeen and Plataean sections with the intention of creating two narratives with a distinctive character, each satisfying a different artistic aim. My analysis of Thucydides' account of the stasis in Corcyra will attempt to define the particular features present in this piece of Thucydidean exposition and to determine whether - as in the case of the two preceding sections - we are able to recognise a peculiar character that marks out this section as a whole.

The account of the stasis in Corcyra extends from chapter 70 to chapter 81 in Book Three, and in the following chapters, 82 and 83 ², Thucydides offers a personal interpretation of the events. Two distinct sections are thus identifiable: the factual report of the situation and the interpretation of it. The presence of a long explanatory

¹ For a discussion on the subject confer the chapters on the Mytilenaeen Debate and the Plataean Trial *ad loc.*

² Concerning the authenticity of chapter 84 many commentators have raised substantial objections, and the most popular view seems to be in favour of a non-Thucydidean composition of the piece. Among the reasons most frequently given is the fact that the ideas expressed appear to be a repetition of concepts already present in the previous chapters. Bloomfield (1830, 87) speaks of a *cento* of Thucydidean sentences. Cf. also A.W.Gomme (*HCT*, II. 382-3), S.Hornblower (1991, 488 ff.) and E.C.Marchant (1962, 194-5).

excursus following a report of events is unusual in the work of Thucydides.³ In our case the explanation appears to be motivated by two main factors. First, the stasis in Corcyra is the first of many to break out during the course of the Peloponnesian War. Secondly, it is treated here as a paradigm case of the kind of excesses caused by that conflict and constantly recurring thereafter (Thuc. III 82.1-2). The tendency to generalisation in these final chapters, noted by many scholars, could therefore be explained as in accordance with the exemplary value assigned to this first stasis.⁴

Thucydides' account of the upheaval begins at chapter 70: the Corcyrean prisoners held by the Corinthians after the battle at Epidamnus are released and sent back to Corcyra with the objective of persuading their fellow-citizens to favour an alliance with Corinth and Sparta. Some of these men prosecute a leader of the democratic party, Peithias, but he is acquitted and released. Subsequently, Peithias brings an action against some of his accusers and they are convicted of a religious offence. At this point the confrontation becomes more serious: Peithias is killed and his opponents gain control of Corcyra. After the arrival of Corinthian ships in their support the ex-prisoners move against the democratic party, which in turn seeks Athenian intervention. The stasis now involves the two main powers, Sparta and Athens, and will lead to two major naval battles. After a further reinforcement approaches, having been sent by the Athenians on learning of the stasis, the Spartans leave the island while the population is still involved in a civil war in which the rules of civilised society are completely abandoned. The account of the stasis is followed by a commentary by the author. The cruelties of this civil war (ὥμῃ <ῆ> στάσις, Thuc. III 82. 1) seemed so hard to believe because Corcyra was the first example of stasis in the course of the present conflict. From now on in Greece the oligarchs will be supporters of Sparta and the democrats of Athens. The cities affected by civil strife will undergo many disasters. The war itself will provoke a change and inversion in the values practised by human beings. At chapters 82 and 83 Thucydides in general terms describes the different kinds of wrongdoing that took place on Corcyra and will later be spread widely in the Greek world. Edmunds has

³ A.W.Gomme (1951, 70-80) analyses four passages of the *History* where Thucydides expresses his own commentary on the events. On this subject see also D. Gribble (1998, 41-67).

⁴ Many studies have been published on the Corcyrean stasis in Thucydides. See in particular A.Fuks (1971, 48 ff.), J.A.F.Bruce (1971, 108-117), J.Wilson (1987), J.Wilson (1982, 18-20), C.Macleod (1983, 123-139), J.T.Hogan (1980, 139-149).

pointed out how this section of the Corcyrean narrative corresponds to Hesiod's prophecy of later events in the Iron Age and to his picture of an inversion of values occurring in human behaviour at that time.⁵ Both Thucydides and Hesiod share the view that human wrongdoing is inherent in man's present nature and "be it in a severer or milder form" (3.82.2) will always recur. Discord reigns between fathers and sons (Hes. *WD* 182-8 and Thuc. III 3.81.5) and piety has vanished (Hes. *WD* 187 and Thuc. III 82.8). Those who keep their oaths are not honoured, but rather those who commit evils (Hes. *WD* 190-2 and Thuc. III 82. 4-5). The sense of shame is lost and justice is replaced by its opposite (Hes. *WD* 192-4 and Thuc. III 82.8). Hesiod concludes by foretelling the rise of an Evil Eris (Hes. *WD* 195-201), which finds a parallel in the *πρόθυμον* mentioned by Thucydides (Thuc. III 82.8). According to Edmunds this correspondence shows a link between Thucydides and archaic pessimism:

"The ethical inversions experienced in stasis are a particular expression of a general ineluctable tendency of human nature to invert the established and proper way of things. Stasis, as the expression of such a tendency, is inevitable and will recur".⁶

Edmunds points out that the same notion is found in earlier authors such as Archilochus, Theognis and Pindar, and also in contemporaries such as Euripides or Aristophanes. His study has the great merit of showing the extent to which even an innovative historian, as Thucydides has often been considered to be, may be found to share values belonging to traditional Greek thinking. It seems reasonable to suppose that the audience would have recognised the parallel between the excesses of the present generation and those that, according to Hesiod, will accompany the end of the whole Iron Age. However, if this parallel was intentional and meant to be understood, I wonder what could have motivated such a choice. *The Works and Days*, along with a few other surviving examples, belong to the kind of literature that scholars most commonly call *wisdom literature*. It is so called because these works usually seek to instruct an audience about a particular subject: the authors can be concerned with explaining nautical techniques, how to cultivate the fields or with the passing on a knowledge of the myths of ancient Greece. The instructive character

⁵ See L. Edmunds (1975, 72-92), on the relationship between Hesiod and history see also T. G. Rosenmeyer (1957, 257-85).

⁶ Cf. L. Edmunds (1975, 88).

gives to these texts a serious setting: a common feature is the presence of a single instructor who addresses a specific addressee or audience and his teaching often includes the exposition of *ainoi*, explanatory or instructive fables. These texts often reveal the presence of different sections, which could be separated one from the other and are normally viewed as suitable for oral performance.⁷ Hesiod's *Works and Days* is considered to be an example of the genre and the text seems to be suitable for reading aloud.⁸ Other possible examples are the poems of Theognis and Solon. Like Hesiod, these authors write with the avowed intention of giving advice after having personally witnessed evil deeds and conduct. The folly and wrongdoing of Perses leads Hesiod to compose for him the *Works and Days*, and likewise the experience of political turmoil leads Solon to compose verses of advice.⁹ We are not well informed about the life of Theognis, but it is probable that he himself, as a member of the aristocracy, suffered the effects of a change of government in his city and was forced into exile.¹⁰ The meditations of these poets spring from their personal experience of wrongdoing in their own generation. As in Hesiod's poetry, such wrongdoing is presented as involving a process of inversion of values. Solon complains of the misdeeds now perpetrated by people belonging to his own generation.

Αὐτοὶ δὲ φθείρειν μεγάλην πόλιν ἀφραδίησιν
 ἄστοι βούλονται χρήμασι πειθόμενοι,
 δήμου θ' ἡγεμόνων ἄδικος νόος, οἷσιν ἐτοῖμον
 ὕβριος ἐκ μεγάλης ἄλγεα πολλὰ παθεῖν·
 οὐ γὰρ ἐπίστανται κατέχειν κόρον οὐδὲ παρούσης

⁷ On wisdom literature in antiquity and its characteristics see in particular: P.Toohy (1996), H.Fränkel (1975), G.B.Walsh (1984), C.O.Pavese (1972) and G.P.Edwards (1971).

⁸ A number of scholars now consider didactic poetry to have been suitable for performance. As for the oral techniques employed in the *Works and Days* see P.Toohy (1996, 21-34). Toohy notes the use of repeated sentences, paratactic constructions and explicative similes. The poem is formed by different *ainoi* kept together by the: "scolding voice of Hesiod as he attempts to set right the conduct of his errant brother, Perses" (32-3). B.Peabody (1975, in particular 9-14 and 236-272) analyses the technique of ancient Greek oral composition through Hesiod's *Works and Days*. He writes in his introduction: "As for the *Works and Days*, the proof that it is a product of oral tradition rests not only on the fact that it has patently served in every way as an exemplar of oral style but also on the fact that time after time it has unexpectedly shown surprising patterns that cast light further illuminating everything we know of oral composition, both contemporary and of the utmost antiquity" (p.13). P.Mazon (1947, 82) argues that the length of the *Works and Days* would make the text suitable to be performed in its entirety in a single recital. Compare also the introduction of M.L.West to Hesiod's *Works and Days* (1978, 24 ff.) for parallels between Hesiod and Near Eastern examples of wisdom literature. For an analysis of the relationship between the Homeric and the Hesiodic style see G.P.Edwards (1971, 23-100).

⁹ For Solon's life and political context see C.M.Bowra (1938, 71-104) and also M.R.Lefkowitz (1981, 40-48).

¹⁰ For the life of Theognis see J.Carriere (1948, 5-13).

εὐφροσύνας κοσμεῖν δαιτὸς ἐν ἡσυχίῃ [. . .]
πλουτέουσιν δ' ἀδίκους ἔργμασι πειθόμενοι [. . .]
οὐθ' ἱερῶν κτεάνων οὔτε τι δημοσίων
φειδόμενοι κλέπτουσιν ἀφαρπαγῇ ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος
οὐδὲ φυλάσσονται σεμνὰ Δίκης θέμεθλα [. . .]
τοῦτ' ἤδη πάσῃ πόλει ἔρχεται ἔλκος ἀφυκτον, v.17
ἐς δὲ κακὴν ταχέως ἤλυθε δουλοσύνην,
ἥ στάσιν ἔμφυλον πόλεμόν θ' εὗδοντ' ἐπεγείρει,
ὅς πολλῶν ἐρατὴν ὤλεσεν ἡλικίην·

“But it is the citizens themselves who by their acts of foolishness and subservience to money are willing to destroy a great city, and the mind of the people’s leaders is unjust; they are certain to suffer much pain as a result of their great arrogance. For they do not know how to restrain excess or to conduct in an orderly and peaceful manner the festivities of the banquet that are at hand... they grow wealthy, yielding to unjust deeds...sparing neither sacred nor private property, they steal with rapaciousness, one from one source, one from another, and they have no regard for the august foundations of justice, [...] this is now coming upon the whole city as an inescapable wound and the city has quickly approached wretched slavery which arouses civil strife and slumbering war, the loss for many of their lovely youth”. (Solon 4, v. 5 ff.)¹¹

Here wrongdoing is manifested in disregard for every rule, sacred or profane, and leads naturally to stasis. Similar ideas are expressed by Theognis. The city is the same, but her people are other men, who of old knew neither judgements nor laws, they deceive one another even while they smile at each other knowing the marks neither of the bad nor of the good (vv. 53-60).

. . .καὶ ἐκ κακοῦ ἐσθλὸν ἔγεντο
καὶ κακὸν ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ· καὶ τε πενιχρὸς ἀνὴρ
αἶψα μάλ' ἐπλούτησε, καὶ ὅς μάλα πολλὰ πέπαται,
ἐξαπίνης ἀπὸ πάντ' οὖν ὤλεσε νυκτὶ μιῇ·
καὶ σῶφρων ἤμαρτε, καὶ ἄφρονι πολλάκι δόξα
ἔσπετο, καὶ τιμῆς καὶ κακὸς ὦν ἔλαχεν.

“[...] Good comes from bad and bad from good; a poor man suddenly gets very rich, and he who has acquired a great deal suddenly loses it all in one night; a sensible man errs, fame often accompanies the fool, and even a base man wins honour.” (Theogn. vv. 661-6)

¹¹ Text and translation from D.E.Gerber (1999).

These changes in society lead to a disruption of traditional values. Violence, greed and arrogance (βίη ἀνδρῶν καὶ δειλὰ καὶ ὕβρις, Theog. v. 835) plunge the city into ruin (εἰς κακότητ' ἔβαλεν, v. 836). Inversion of values naturally follows:

Κύρν', οἱ πρόσθ' ἀγαθοὶ νῦν αὖ κακοί, οἱ δὲ κακοὶ πρὶν
νῦν ἀγαθοί. τίς κεν ταῦτ' ἀνέχοιτ' ἐσορῶν,
τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς μὲν ἀτιμοτέρους, κακίους δὲ λαχόντας
τιμῆς; μνηστεύει δ' ἐκ κακοῦ ἐσθλὸς ἀνήρ·
ἀλλήλους δ' ἀπατῶντες ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι γελῶσιν,
οὔτ' ἀγαθῶν μνήμην εἰδότες οὔτε κακῶν.

“Cyrnus, those who were formerly noble are now base, and those who were base before are now noble. Who can endure the sight of this, the noble dishonoured and the base honoured? A man who is noble seeks marriage with the daughter of one who is base. They deceive one another and mock one another, with no recollection of what is noble or base”. (Theogn. vv. 1109-14).¹²

Both Solon and Theognis see a negative change in the present generation and such a change causes political turmoil. Theognis warns of the impending dangers as well as looking for possible explanations. The ultimate causes of decline are found to be in human nature: Hesiod speaks of envy that delights in evil (Ζήλος...κακόχαρτος, v. 195f.) while Solon speaks of folly (ἄφραδία frag. 4 v. 6) and Theognis of violence, greed and arrogance (βίη ἀνδρῶν καὶ κέρδεα δειλὰ καὶ ὕβρις, v. 835) as principal causes of disruption. The historical background behind Hesiod's *Works and Days* may have been similar. Sinclair writes that the poem reflects a growing political discontent which is also revealed in the myth of the Five Ages.¹³ The poet played a role “in educating public opinion towards a higher conception of justice and of every man's right to it”.¹⁴ This is still applicable to Hesiod's presentation of the fifth race, even if the basic myth of the succession of races comes from the ancient Near East, as West believes.¹⁵ For a solution to such a problem these poets seem merely to rely on the favour of the Gods. The power of the gods pervades Hesiod, Solon admits that the fate of Athens depends on the will of Zeus (frag. 4 v. 1-2), and the same spirit is recognisable in Theognis. It appears that behind authors of didactic poetry there lies a

¹² Text and translation from Theognis are from D.E.Gerber (1999).

¹³ Cf. T.A.Sinclair (1932, XVII).

¹⁴ Cf. T.A.Sinclair (1932, XIX).

¹⁵ Cf. M.L.West (1978, 172-177).

traditional cultural background from which common ideas are derived. The parallel Edmunds has discovered between Thucydides and Hesiod and the common features, which link Hesiod with other representatives of wisdom literature, naturally raise the question of the precise relationship between Thucydides' account and these different poems. In other words, should we consider the echo of the myth of the Five Ages as a mere element of minor importance in his overall description of the stasis on Corcyra, or might it rather hint at a deeper interrelationship between that account and didactic literature in general?

A didactic purpose does not seem to be outside the overall plan of the *History*. In the first book Thucydides, referring to his work writes:

ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὖθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι. ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἔξει.

“... whoever shall wish to have a clear view both of the events which have happened and of those which will some day, in all human probability, happen again in the same or a similar way - for these to adjudge my history profitable will be enough for me.” (Thuc. I 22. 4)

The events on Corcyra are actually presented as an *exemplum* of one kind of situation that “might happen again in the same or a similar way”, as is clear from the commentaries in c.82 and 83. That section is intended to warn the audience of such dangers and the same search for causes that we found in the older poets is present here. Like Hesiod and his colleagues, Thucydides looks to human nature for possible explanations, and teaches similar lessons. According to him greed (πλεονεξία) and ambition (φιλοτιμία) are the main causes of disruption (Thuc. III 82). As in Solon, the wrongdoing generates stasis and disrespect for every law, human or sacred (III 82). As in the archaic poets, disruption has a political basis and involves a negative inversion of values. All these considerations spring from the author's personal experience and knowledge of Greek society in his own time just as in the case of Hesiod, Solon and Theognis. Viewed against this background, the link with Hesiod acquires a new significance: Thucydides' description of the stasis not only reveals the influence of *archaic pessimism*, as Edmunds says, but has in fact been composed in accordance with the range of ideas proper to didactic works.

Bearing these considerations in mind, it is now useful to look at a later echo of Thucydides himself in Plato. Considerations on the process of degeneration of society are found in Book Eight of the *Republic* (560 D ff.). Plato describes the process by which the democratic man develops from the oligarchic type. This development is negative and involves an inversion of values: faction and internal strife arise in the soul of the oligarchic man (στάσις δὴ καὶ ἀντίστασις καὶ μάχη, Plato. *Rep.* 560 A) and the new democratic elements seize the citadel of the young man's soul:

Αὐτοὶ τε κρατοῦσι μαχόμενοι, καὶ τὴν μὲν αἰδῶ ἡλιθιότητα ὀνομάζοντες ὠθοῦσιν ἔξω ἀτίμως φυγάδα, σωφροσύνην δὲ ἀνανδρίαν καλοῦντές τε καὶ προπηλακίζοντες ἐκβάλλουσι, μετριότητα δὲ καὶ κοσμίαν δαπάνην ὡς ἀγροικίαν καὶ ἀνελευθερίαν οὔσαν πείθοντες ὑπερορίζουσι μετὰ πολλῶν καὶ ἀνωφελῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν. . . τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο ἤδη ὕβριν καὶ ἀναρχίαν καὶ ἀσωτίαν καὶ ἀναίδειαν λαμπρὰς μετὰ πολλοῦ χοροῦ κατάγουσιν ἐστεφανωμένας, ἐγκωμιάζοντες καὶ ὑποκοριζόμενοι, ὕβριν μὲν εὐπαιδευσίαν καλοῦντες, ἀναρχίαν δὲ ἐλευθερίαν, ἀσωτίαν δὲ μεγαλοπρέπειαν, ἀναίδειαν δὲ ἀνδρείαν.

“they themselves”, Plato writes, “prevail in the conflict, and naming reverence and awe “folly” thrust it, a dishonoured fugitive. And temperance they call “want of manhood” and banish it with contumely, and they teach that moderation and orderly expenditure are rusticity and illiberality, and they combine with a gang of unprofitable and harmful appetites to drive them over the border.[...] They proceed to lead home from exile insolence and anarchy and prodigality and shamelessness, resplendent in a great attendant choir and crowned with garlands, and in celebration of their praises they euphemistically denominate insolence “good breeding”, licence “liberty”, prodigality “magnificence”, and shamelessness “manly spirit”(Plato, *Rep.* 560 D-E).

Both Wasserman and Hornblower have recognised in these words an echo of the final chapters on the Corcyrean stasis in Thucydides.¹⁶ However, a closer look at other sections of the *Republic* might also help to outline the possible interrelationship between Plato's and Thucydides' passages. In *Republic* Book Eight, the discussion on the different forms of governments also begins with an echo of Hesiod and the myth of the five ages:

ὁμοῦ δὲ μιγέντος σιδήρου ἀργύρῳ καὶ χαλκοῦ χρυσῷ ἀνομοιότης ἐγγενήσεται καὶ ἀνωμαλία ἀνάρμοστος, ἃ γενόμενα, οὗ ἂν ἐγγένηται,

¹⁶ Cf. F.M. Wasserman (1954, 46-54) and S. Hornblower (1991, 483).

ἀεὶ τίκτει πόλεμον καὶ ἔχθραν. Ταύτης τοι γενεᾶς χρὴ φάναι εἶναι
στάσιν, ὅπου ἂν γίγνηται ἀεὶ.

“And this intermixture of the iron with the silver and the bronze with the gold will engender unlikeness and an inharmonious unevenness, things that always beget war and enmity wherever they arise. Of this lineage we must aver dissension to be, wherever it occurs and always” (*Rep.* VIII 547 A).¹⁷

There is thus an interesting twofold parallel between Plato’s *Republic* and the description of the stasis at Corcyra in Thucydides. Moreover, these echoes are not fortuitous. They appear to be generated by a similar approach to the understanding of reality. Plato aims to expound the different kinds of government: it is in the present generation that a deterioration similar to that of the Iron Age as prophesied by Hesiod occurs, and the process of inversion applies to the democratic form of government, and thus to the contemporary institution. Book Eight of the *Republic* analyses the successive stages of decline of society and of the soul. Nettleship notes that each of the constitutions of the society that Plato describes reveals an expression of the dominion of a certain psychological tendency which, if unchecked, will lead to certain results, often negative. “In each picture,” Nettleship writes, “all the traits described are symptoms of a psychological change going on within and all the details are worth studying”.¹⁸ As a result the *Republic* is interpreted by Nettleship as a first attempt to construct a “philosophy of history” and this implies that: “the historian can see certain laws or principles of which human history exhibits the working”.¹⁹ This interpretation of Book Eight comes close to what seems to be the aim of Thucydides in writing his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, and in particular in the commentary on the stasis at Corcyra. In both Thucydides and Plato the negative picture derives from a negative judgement passed on their societies in their political aspect and apparently both authors, in expressing their concerns, had recourse to the earlier remonstrative attitude found in Hesiod. We might further infer that, in alluding to Thucydides, Plato also intended to echo the didactic tone that he must have recognised in the Corcyrean stasis.

¹⁷ Text and translation from Plato are from P.Shorey (1956).

¹⁸ Cf. R.L.Nettleship (1925, 299).

¹⁹ Cf.R.L.Nettleship (1925, 299).

This similarity in content between authors of wisdom literature and Thucydides, leads us to consider whether the style of their compositions is also comparable. Yet here, apparently, we lose sight of any connection.

Didactic poems conformed to particular stylistic criteria apparently intended to facilitate the audience's comprehension. The use of repeated sentences helped the listener to follow the development of the narrative: often the beginning and the end of the whole section are marked by the occurrence of similar sentences, which helped to define the self-contained exposition. Preference is given to paratactic constructions and to words belonging to the traditional cultural background shared by the listeners.²⁰ The didactic intention is particularly evident in the final part of Thucydides' account of the stasis in Corcyra, and the content of that part is consistent with the range of ideas to be formed in didactic poetry. Yet that particular part of the account is written in very difficult Greek. The ancient critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus writes:

ἐν μὲν οὖν τῇ τρίτῃ βύβλῳ τὰ περὶ Κέρκυραν ὡμὰ καὶ ἀνόσια ἔργα διὰ τὴν στάσιν εἰς τοὺς δυνατωτάτους ἐκ τοῦ δήμου γεγόμενα διεξιὼν, ἕως μὲν ἐν τῷ κοινῷ καὶ συνήθει τῆς διαλέκτου τρόπῳ τὰ πραχθέντα δηλοῖ, σαφῶς τε καὶ συντόμως καὶ δυνατῶς ἅπαντα εἴρηκεν· ἀρξάμενος δὲ ἐπιτραγωδεῖν τὰς κοινὰς τῶν Ελλήνων συμφορὰς καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ἐξαλλάττειν ἐκ τῶν ἐν ἔθει μακρῷ τι γίγνεται χείρων αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ.

"In the third book, when he is describing the Corcyrean revolution and the inhuman atrocities committed against the leading democrats, so long as he tells the story in normal, familiar language, he says everything clearly, concisely and forcefully. But when he begins to dramatise the sufferings of the Greeks in general, and to divert his thoughts from his accustomed channels, he falls far below his own standards" (*De Thuc.* 28).

Dionysius then offers what could be called a syntactical reconstruction of chapters 82 and 83, with a view to making them more intelligible to the reader. He thus regards Thucydides:

σκολιὰ καὶ δυσπαρακολούθητα καὶ τὰς τῶν σχηματισμῶν πλοκάς σολοικοφανεῖς ἔχοντα καὶ οὔτε τοῖς κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν βίον γενομένοις

²⁰ For the oral techniques employed in didactic poetry, see P. Toohey (1996, 21-34).

ἐπιτηδευθέντα οὔτε τοῖς ὕστερον, ὅτε μάλιστα ἤκμασεν ἡ πολιτικὴ δύναμις

“he is tortuous and difficult to follow, containing combinations of figures that verge upon solecism. Such a style was not employed either by his own or by succeeding generations, who wrote when politicians were at the height of their professional influence” (*De Thuc.* 29).²¹

The process of reshaping Thucydides’ commentary on events during the stasis in Corcyra occupies four chapters. In the judgement of Dionysius the whole structure of the text is here incomprehensible without further explanation. One difference he notes between the style used for recounting the stasis itself and that employed in the subsequent commentary, is the way in which the sentence-structures and the vocabulary become unclear and even annoying (*De Thuc.* 30).²²

It is worth having a closer look at the account of the stasis and verifying the reliability of these observations. The account of the revolt itself does not seem to be very different from other comparable accounts in Thucydides. The narrative begins with a view of the situation in Corcyra. Preliminary information is given on the causes of the revolt. Connor notes that here Thucydides “departs from his usual annalistic form to provide a summary of events between his last discussion of Corcyra, at the outbreak of the war, and the events of 427 BC that he will soon analyse”.²³ This summary might also be intended to give preliminary information to an audience, as we already suggested in the case of Plataea.²⁴ As in the case of the Pausanias excursus, both the fictitious and the true reason for disagreement are stated.²⁵ Thucydides then describes in a clear narrative style the different parties in the city and their opposite designs. Closer views of the development of the events follow. The killing of Peithias and other members of the assembly signals the beginning of the revolt, the development of which is then followed in detail. The different stages of the conflict between the two opposite groups are interrupted by the intervention of

²¹ Text and translation are from S.Usher (1974).

²² See, however, the arguments raised by C. MacLeod (1983, 131-135) in defence of Thucydides’ style and against the criticism levelled against this section by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. MacLeod argues that in spite of Dionysius’ criticism, the peculiar Thucydidean features of the language of this section reinforce its message.

²³ Cf. W.R.Connor (1984, 96).

²⁴ Cf. our discussion in chapter five on the Plataean Trial.

²⁵ Cf. our discussion in chapter one on the Pausanians and Themistocles excursus.

Nicostratos, who persuades the parties to come to an agreement, but the situation remains critical. The arrival of ships from Sparta leads to a naval engagement: the Spartans win, but instead of attacking the city, they set fire to the countryside. In the meantime, 60 ships from Athens arrive in support of Corcyra and the Spartans decide to withdraw. The Corcyreans proceed to kill everyone they thought was opposed to democracy. The various events are reported in detail in a narrative style that presents no particular difficulties. Connor notes that this account has been organised according to a parallel structure: the episode of Peithias narrated at the beginning focuses on the attempt at persuasion and the violation of widely accepted restraints; and these are among the major characteristics developed in the following events. “As often, what seems minor or of passing interest in the first element in a ring-composition, returns in the last element with renewed significance”.²⁶ Moreover, the account gives the impression that violence and cruelty intensify in the course of the events recounted. This crescendo reaches a climax with the description of the summary killing of all the presumed enemies of a democratic government.²⁷ The conclusion of the description of the stasis is as follows:

Πᾶσά τε ἰδέα κατέστη θανάτου, καὶ οἷον φιλεῖ ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ γίγνεσθαι, οὐδὲν ὅ τι οὐ ξυνέβη καὶ ἔτι περαιτέρω. Καὶ γὰρ πατὴρ παῖδα ἀπέκτεινε καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἱερῶν ἀπεσπῶντο καὶ πρὸς αὐτοῖς ἐκτείνοντο, οἱ δὲ τινες καὶ περιοικοδομηθέντες ἐν τοῦ Διονύσου τῷ ἱερῷ ἀπέθανον.

“Death in every form ensued, and whatever horrors are wont to be perpetrated at such time all happened then- aye, and even worse. For father slew son, men were dragged from the temples and slain near them, and some were even walled up in the temple of Dionysus and perished there.” (Thuc. III 81.5)

At this point, Thucydides’ own interpretation and explanation of the events follows:

Οὕτως ὥμῃ ἢ στάσις προухώρησε

“To such an excess of savagery did the revolution go...” (Thuc. III 82)

²⁶ Cf. W.R. Connor (1984, 96). Connor also notes that the story is presented as a series of attempts to persuasion: “there are over a dozen occurrences of the verb “to persuade” and its compounds in half as many pages of text. But the theme is ironic: discussion, argument, persuasion produce no conciliation” (p.97-8).

²⁷ Cf. also S. Hornblower (1991, 468-69), who notes that the “escalation” in the account of Corcyra stasis is very carefully managed.

The reflection begins by pointing out the cruel character of the revolt. The descriptive phrase οὕτως ὥμῃ occupies first position in the sentence: violence and its effects are precisely the main subject of the commentary. What happened at Corcyra, Thucydides says, is also the first example of the atrocities that will happen many other times during the course of that war.

ἐπεὶ ὕστερόν γε καὶ πᾶν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐκινήθη, διαφορῶν οὐσῶν ἑκασταχοῦ τοῖς τε τῶν δήμων προστάταις τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐπάγεσθαι καὶ τοῖς ὀλίγοις τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους.

“For afterwards practically the whole Hellenic world was convulsed, since in each state the leaders of the democratic factions were at variance with the oligarchs, the former seeking to bring in the Athenians, the latter the Lacedaemonians.” (III c. 82.1)

Events in Corcyra are interpreted as a first occurrence of the kind of political behaviour that constantly occurred during the Peloponnesian War. While in peace men had no excuse for making such political choices, in time of war every kind of association might be considered legitimate. This idea is expressed through a sentence where ἐν μὲν εἰρήνῃ plus participle is followed by πολεμουμένων δὲ plus finite verb (Thuc. III 82.1). This syntactical association creates what Marchant calls “the most extraordinary anacoluthon in Thucydides”.²⁸ With the use of *variatio*, the changes that human nature undergoes seem to affect even the language. From the present war the narrative moves to a consideration of what is usually like human behaviour in a case of stasis.

Καὶ ἐπέπεσε πολλὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ κατὰ στάσιν ταῖς πόλεσι, γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾗ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαιότερα καὶ τοῖς εἵδεσι διηλλαγμένα, ὡς ἂν ἑκασταὶ αἱ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχιῶν ἐφιστῶνται.

“And so there fell upon the cities on account of revolutions many grievous calamities, such as happen and always will happen while human nature is the same, but which are severer or milder, and different in their manifestations, according as the variations in circumstances present themselves in each case.” (Thuc. III 82.2)

Neuter adjectives and participles are widely used in this section: attention is no longer directed at the historical situation, but at human behaviour in general. The neuter

²⁸ Cf. E.C.Marchant (1962, 189).

stresses the absence of any specific referent. The change of perspective is even clearer in the following period. Thucydides resumes the opposition εἰρήνη / πόλεμος we have found in the preceding lines, but his attention is no longer centred on the case of Corcyra, but on how human beings generally tend to react to a war or peace situation.

ἐν μὲν γὰρ εἰρήνῃ καὶ ἀγαθοῖς πράγμασιν αἱ τε πόλεις καὶ οἱ ἰδιῶται ἀμείνους τὰς γνώμας ἔχουσι διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ἀκουσίους ἀνάγκας πίπτειν· ὁ δὲ πόλεμος ὑφελὼν τὴν εὐπορίαν τοῦ καθ' ἡμέραν βίαιος διδάσκαλος καὶ πρὸς τὰ παρόντα τὰς ὀργὰς τῶν πολλῶν ὁμοιοῖ.

“For in peace and prosperity both states and individuals have gentler feelings, because men are not then forced to face conditions of dire necessity; but war, which robs men of the easy supply of their daily wants, is a rough schoolmaster and creates in most people a temper that matches their conditions.”(Thuc., III. 82.2)

The wrongdoing prevalent during the Peloponnesian War is part of a universal process of disruption, for which war is responsible, now figuratively personified. Attention is centred on stasis as a transforming force: ἐστασιάζε τε are the words which start the following period with the verb στασιάζω in *positio princeps* (III. 82, 3). The description of the process of inversion of values follows:

Καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιοῦσει. Τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη, μέλλησις δὲ προμηθὴς δειλία εὐπρεπής, τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἅπαν ξυνετὸν ἐπὶ πᾶν ἀργόν· τὸ δ' ἐμπλήκτως ὅξυ ἀνδρὸς μοίρα προσετέθη, ἀσφαλεία δὲ τὸ ἐπιβουλεύεσθαι ἀποτροπῆς πρόφασις εὐλογος.

“The ordinary meaning of words in their relation to things was changed as men thought fit. Reckless audacity came to be regarded as courageous loyalty to party, prudent hesitation as specious cowardice, moderation as a cloak for unmanly weakness, and to be clever in everything was to do naught in anything. Frantic impulsiveness was accounted a true man's part, but caution in deliberation a specious pretext for shirking.”(Thuc. III. 82. 4)

Thucydides here exploits the theme of inversion of values, a thing already lamented by earlier poets in their own time²⁹, and creates strong juxtapositions. This very long

²⁹ Cf. Solon frag. 4, Theogn. v. 660 ff.

analysis of wrong behaviour develops in a very articulate structure. While in the passage quoted above Thucydides elaborates his thought resorting to many substantives and adjectives often disposed in chiasmic order, in the next sentence participles and compound verbs prevail.

Καὶ ὁ μὲν χαλεπαίνων πιστὸς αἰεὶ, ὁ δ' ἀντιλέγων αὐτῷ ὑποπτος. ἐπιβουλεύσας δέ τις τυχὼν ξυνετὸς καὶ ὑπονοήσας ἔτι δεινότερος· προβουλεύσας δὲ ὅπως μηδὲν αὐτῶν δεήσει, τῆς τε ἑταιρίας διαλυτῆς καὶ τοὺς ἐναντίους ἐκπεπληγμένους.

“The hot-headed man was always trusted, his opponent suspected. He who succeeded in a plot was clever, and he who had detected one was even shrewder; on the other hand, he who made its aim to have no need of such things was a disrupter of party and scared of his opponents.” (Thuc. III 82.5)

Again antithetical constructions, but here attention is focused not so much on the process of inversion itself, but rather on the individuals principally responsible for such degeneration, Thucydides' contemporaries. The traditional topic of inversion is applied, here again, to a particular historical situation, but this event is so extreme that the usual words are no longer adequate for expressing what has happened. Verbs are given a prefix which helps to clarify the idea (cf. ἀντιλέγων, ἐπιβουλεύσας, ὑπονοήσας, προβουλεύσας and -in the next part of the text- διανοῦμαι, παρανομῆσαι etc.). Many words occur in Thucydides only in these chapters (διαλυτῆς, γενναιότης, κακοτροπία, etc.).³⁰ The particular inversion of values taking place in Thucydides' own time is the latest occurrence of an old phenomenon, but at the same time it goes far beyond that. Thucydides seems to be suggesting that the excesses committed during the present war surpass anything that could have happened in the past and that such a new situation can only be illustrated through the use of a new structure and vocabulary. This suggestion appears to be in line with Thucydides' overall interpretation of the Peloponnesian War as the greatest war ever fought (Thuc.I 1). It is worth noting that, looking at *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, we find that words like ἐφυστερίζω, περιτέχνησις, διαλυτῆς, κακοτροπία used in chapters 82 and 83 are further attested almost exclusively in texts of post-classical

³⁰ Seven words occur in c.82-83 which are not found elsewhere in Thucydides (ἐφυστερίζειν, καινότης, περιτέχνησις, ἐκπλήκτως, διαλυτῆς, γενναιότης, κακοτροπία) this is a clear indication of the peculiarity of these chapters. For Thucydides' vocabulary here see also P.Huart (1968, 30-32).

authors.³¹ In Thucydides' chapters 82 and 83 the structure of the sentences undergoes a process of dramatic changes, the participial constructions and anacolutha make the periods difficult to follow, the syntax mirrors the extreme character of this historical situation. The vocabulary itself seems also to be drawn into this process of change. Positive terms like *συμμαχία*, *εὐσεβεία*, *ὅρκοι*, are used to signify actions that lead to a negative effect and have lost their normal value, as C.Macleod has pointed out.³² *ὅρκοι* and *συμμαχίαι* are connected with damage to the state and do not function in the usual way as safety-measures (III.82.1 and 7). The use of positive terms in a negative context conveys through the structure the kind of inversion described in the content. Although Thucydides expresses traditional topics in his commentary, the language he uses reflects the involved style of the new Sophistic of his own time.³³

In addition to the Sophists another contemporary influence affecting the style of this section is medical writing. It has been noted that there are similarities in language between the descriptions of the plague and the stasis in Thucydides.³⁴ *Πρόφασις* (III.82.1), for example, is a word that according to the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* is commonly used in medical treatises. Moreover, the search for the causes of stasis seems to be carried on by the same process of enquiry as that already followed in the description of the plague. The disease is understood as a natural disaster: man has no means of avoiding it, but it is possible to gain a better understanding of the symptoms. The search for symptoms also occurs in the account of the stasis in Corcyra and the causes hypothesised might help to avoid further occurrences: if *φιλοτιμία* and *πλεονεξία* are the major factors, then avoiding them might help to limit the occurrence of stasis. Moreover, the extreme and unprecedented way of taking revenge (*ἄτοπία*, Thuc. III 82.3), one of the reasons why the usual value of words has changed, is reminiscent of the *ἄτοπία* by which everything is also modified

³¹ Cf. the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* ad loc.

³² Cf. C.Macleod (1983, 126 ff.) points out that the same elements usually acting to facilitate the process towards civilisation, lead during stasis to a contrary effect.

³³ Cf. also the introductory note to Corcyra in Marchant (1962, p. XXXVII): "The digression on party strife in the Greek states must be reckoned along with the speeches. It is written in the same tortuous, artificial style in which large parts of the speeches are written; and we may surmise that if any speaker had been available for the purpose, the author would have attributed these reflections to him instead of giving them in his own character".

³⁴ On the occurrence of medical terms see S.Hornblower's commentary (1991, 479 ff.). C.N.Cochrane (1929, 133) affirms that the description of the plague follows the medical approach, starting with a *κατάστασις* and following with a description of symptoms and prognosis. See also W.R.Connor (1984, 99-105).

during the plague (ἄτοπία....οὐδὲν τῶν εἰωθότων, Thuc. II 51). This rationalistic mode of enquiry might also be motivated by the change of religious perspective that separates Thucydides from the earlier poets. Hesiod, Theognis and Solon, who were able to recognise the faults in their society, they could also expect that Gods would resolve matters. This kind of resolution does not apply to Thucydides' interpretation of the stasis: for him human wrongdoing can only be dealt with by human intervention.³⁵ The first effect of this approach is that archaic wisdom is subjected to a process of rationalisation. Faith in traditional values and condemnation of wrongdoing retain their importance, but these features are now matters for investigation in a rational enquiry from which gods are excluded.

It seems to me that Thucydides' intention here is to let his audience recognise the parallel between the values expressed in his commentary on events and in earlier didactic poems, whilst at the same time stressing the differences. The task of describing these excesses calls for a new vocabulary and a new style if it is to be expressed effectively. In place of the simple structure characteristic of the archaic poets, a new and complex style is adopted in order to convey the enormity of the crimes that have arisen. And a process of enquiry is followed, analogous to those of contemporary science. In placing himself alongside Hesiod, Thucydides assumes here the poet's role of wise adviser, but he does it as a modern historian, who has also achieved new approaches to reality. The text evidences the change of perspective that separates Thucydides from Hesiod. As a whole, the section on the stasis is a piece of *modernised* wisdom literature: that renews the appeal to traditional values shared by the archaic poets by means of a new, rational method of enquiry.

Modern critics do not appear to be the only ones to attach a didactic character to the episode of the Corcyrean stasis. Poppo in his commentary points out that Tacitus recalls the motif of eternal recurrence of human wrongdoing found in Thucydides (*Hist. IV 74 vitia erunt donec homines et similia complura*, etc.).³⁶ Moreover, historians of the reign of Justinian (AD 527-65) such as Procopius look to Thucydides as a model, and echo the Corcyrean narrative. The ideas on the immutability of

³⁵ I agree with C. MacLeod (1983, 127) when he writes that: "for Thucydides, there is not even Hesiod's crumb of comfort: Ζεὺς δ' ὀλέσει καὶ τοῦτο γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων (*W.D.* 180)".

³⁶ Cf. E.F. Poppo's commentary (1834) *ad c.* 82-83).

human behaviour, as expressed at the beginning of Thucydides' chapter 82, seem to be recalled in Procopius 132.22 and the inversion in the evaluation of good politicians found at c. 82.7 recurs in Procopius. (293.36).³⁷

Even more interesting are the borrowings in Agathias. Agathias composed his history during the reign of Justin II and Tiberius. His work is thus later than that of Procopius, and although he is not one of the ecclesiastical historians, his ideas move closer to their interpretation of historical causation. "Agathias' main preoccupation in writing history," as A. Cameron affirms, "is not with truth, but with moral utility"³⁸; this concern seems to lead him to adapt historical events to his own concept of morality. He knows the work of Thucydides, as many of his contemporaries did, but his moral attitude makes him inclined to pay more attention to particular sections of the Peloponnesian War to which moral considerations could be attached. The Sicilian Expedition as recounted by Thucydides is one of these:

"He makes defeat in war by definition the result of ἀδικία and after saying this he goes on to cite as an example the Sicilian expedition; but here he has to extend ἀδικία to include folly".³⁹

In view of these considerations we might assume that Agathias might also have regarded as a direct example of morality applied to history, the commentary on the events occurred at Corcyra in Thucydides. And this indeed proves to be the case. Many passages from c. 82 and 83 are echoed in Agathias: the idea of eternal recurrence of wrongdoing is recalled in two different passages with words similar to those found in Thucydides:

Thuc. III 82 .2

Καὶ ἐπέπεσε πολλὰ καὶ χαλεπὰ κατὰ στάσιν ταῖς πόλεσι, γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾗ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαιτέρα καὶ τοῖς εἶδεσι διηλλαγμένα, ὥς ἂν ἕκασται αἰ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχιῶν ἐφιστῶνται.

³⁷ For the classical influences found in these historians see in particular: J.A.Evans (1976, 353-58), A.Cameron (1985). P.Carolla (1997, 157-176) finds some Thucydidean echoes in the letters of Procopius.

³⁸ Cf. A.Cameron (1970, 33); see also K. Adshead (1983, 82-87).

³⁹ A.Cameron (1970, 55).

Οἶμαι γὰρ οὐδὲ ἐπιλείψειν ποτὲ τὸν αἰῶνα ἡμῶν τὰ τοιάδε, μένειν δὲ ἐς αἰὲ καὶ ἀκμάζειν, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾗ, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἄνωθεν ἡμῖν, ὡς ἔπος εἶπεῖν, συνεισηλθε τῷ βίῳ.

“I am convinced, for my part, that our generation shall see no end to such ills, since, human nature being what it is, they are a permanent and ever increasing phenomenon and, indeed, one which is practically as old as man himself.”

πῇ δὲ ἄλλα ἅττα φρικωδέστερα ξυνέβαινε, γενόμενα μὲν πολλάκις πρότερον, καὶ αἰὲ ἐσόμενα, ἔστ' ἂν γῇ τε ἡ καὶ φύσεως ἀμαρτήματα, τότε δὲ κατὰ τὸ μᾶλλον ἅπαντα ἅμα συνενηγμένα.

“In other places there were other still more horrifying things happening, and, though these followed an oft-repeated pattern which will recur time and again as long as this imperfect world of ours remains, yet their impact was on that occasion more shocking because they all occurred simultaneously”.⁴⁰

These echoes seem to confirm that the difficult Greek criticised by later commentators like Dionysius of Halicarnassus did not prevent the text from being understood and recalled by much later historians.

In this respect we should also add that, while it is true that the account of the Corcyraean stasis in Thucydides is difficult to read, nonetheless, we are now unable to verify if an audience would have encountered the same problems when the text was read aloud. Obscure language might, in fact, *call for performance*. We know that performance was essential for understanding a tragic text and that orators like Demosthenes believed that a good delivery could help to gain a better comprehension of speeches that were pronounced in front of an audience.⁴¹ Recently, a valuable work by F. De Martino has shown us how for ancient authors the recitation of their work and the techniques employed were a matter of importance.⁴² In our case, it

⁴⁰ Text from Agathias is from R.Keydell (1967) and translation from J.D.Frendo (1975). The Thucydidean echo at I 1.2 appears at the beginning of Agathias' history. At V 3.9 Agathias describes a terrible earthquake that razed Constantinople to the ground between the 14th and the 23rd December AD 557. As a result of this disaster the ordered structure of society was thrown into wild confusion.

⁴¹ Cf. Cicero (*Orator*, 7.56), Quintilian (*I.O.* XI 3.6), Valerius Maximus (VIII 10). See also the view of Lavency (1958) reported in the introduction.

⁴² Cf. F.De Martino (1995, 17-59). De Martino notes the “tours de force” used by tragedians in order to please their audiences. “Vocal acrobatics” and some particular strategies used by the sophists to improve their performances are also studied.

seems feasible to suppose that precisely the syntactical density, the use of participles and nominal constructions present from chapter 82 onward, might require an appropriate oral delivery so as to make the section understandable. Here, the syntactical density requires in fact a lot of vocal strikes to help to clarify the syntax itself. A good ὑποκριτής could, through the performance, point the attention to the antitheses present in the text. The inversion of values creates a paradoxical situation: the voice of the actor could emphatically point to the subjects of inversion and promote the irony supplying the inverted commas and the italics not brought out normally in modern translations. Although the question whether the stasis section could have been delivered orally does not find any conclusive answer, it seems to me that this unit would be better understood, especially in its final part, and more effective if read aloud as a contemporary example of didactic literature.⁴³

The Corcyrean stasis and the historical view of Thucydides

After considering the structure and style of the Corcyra section in Thucydides, it seems to me useful to have a general look at the historical background of these events in order to gain a better understanding of the situation described.

In the course of Book One Thucydides mentions Corcyra for the first time: at the Athenian assembly the Corcyreans and Corinthians each make a speech. The ambassadors of Corcyra say they have no intention of turning to Corinth for alliance, and remind the Athenians that they have always maintained a position of neutrality (I 35). In their reply the Corinthians try to persuade Athens not to give help to the Corcyreans, though they do not deny the neutrality claimed by their adversaries (I 37.2). The Corinthians' proposal does not gain approval and Athens decides on a defensive alliance with Corcyra. The following chapters describe the outbreak of the conflict involving Athens and Corcyra on one side and Corinth and its allies on the other. At the battle at Sybota the Corinthians manage to take a thousand Corcyrean prisoners and retain a significant number of them:

⁴³ Cf. S. Hornblower (1987, 29) advances the idea that the section 82-83 might have been recited at symposia or drinking clubs.

Καὶ τῶν Κερκυραίων ὀκτακοσίους μὲν οἱ ἦσαν δοῦλοι ἀπέδοντο, πεντήκοντα δὲ καὶ διακοσίους δήσαντες ἐφύλασσον καὶ ἐν θεραπείᾳ εἶχον πολλῇ, ὅπως αὐτοῖς τὴν Κέρκυραν ἀναχωρήσαντες προσποιήσων· ἐτύγχανον δὲ καὶ δυνάμει αὐτῶν οἱ πλείους πρῶτοι ὄντες τῆς πόλεως.

“Of their Corcyrean prisoners they sold eight hundred who were slaves, but two hundred and fifty they kept in custody and treated them with much consideration, their motive being that when they returned to Corcyra they might win it over to their side; and it so happened that most of these were among the most influential men of the city.” (Thuc. I. 55)

The way in which the situation is presented in the first book shows the absence of a pro-Corinthian movement in Corcyra at that time. When Thucydides’ account of these events is resumed in Book III, the image given of the political situation in the island is consistent with the interpretation of the facts already presented in Book I.

Οἱ γὰρ Κερκυραῖοι ἐστασίαζον, ἐπειδὴ οἱ αἰχμάλωτοι ἦλθον αὐτοῖς οἱ ἐκ τῶν περὶ Επίδαμνον ναυμαχιῶν ὑπὸ Κορινθίων ἀφεθέντες, τῷ μὲν λόγῳ ὀκτακοσίων ταλάντων τοῖς προξένοις διηγγυημένοι, ἔργῳ δὲ πεπεισμένοι Κορινθίοις Κέρκυραν προσποιῆσαι.

“The Corcyreans had been in a state of revolution ever since the home-coming of the captives who had been taken in the two sea-fights off Epidamnus and had been released by the Corinthians. They had nominally been set free on bail in the sum of eight hundred talents pledged by their proxeni, but in fact they had been bribed to bring Corcyra over the Corinthians side.” (Thuc. III 70.1)

Again Thucydides makes clear that the Corcyreans in general did not want to go over to the Corinthians. The people who took the side of Corinth at that time were actually ex-prisoners bribed by their enemies and these men were able to exert a certain influence on the population because they were among the most influential persons in the city, as Thucydides has already said in the first book. But the great majority of the Corcyreans seem to share hostility towards the Corinthians and favour the Athenians. We know from Thucydides about the pro-Athenian policy conducted during the first part of the hostilities by Peithias, a man who will subsequently be assassinated by the conspirators. Peithias is said to be “a volunteer proxenus of the Athenians and leader of the popular party” (ἦν γὰρ Πειθίας ἐθελοπρόξενός τε τῶν Αθηναίων καὶ τοῦ δήμου προειστήκει, Thuc. III 70. 3). He seems to have been just one of the

leaders of the popular party at that time and not the only one. At chapter 75 Thucydides speaks of other *προστάται τοῦ δήμου* who persuade the Athenian general Nicostratos to leave them five of his ships, “that their opponents might be somewhat less inclined to disturbance” (Thuc. III 75. 1).⁴⁴ The common assumption made by many scholars is that at the outbreak of the stasis the demos was actually on the Athenian and therefore democratic side whilst the wealthy people inclined towards Corinth and the Spartan side.⁴⁵ But it does not seem to me that the text gives us enough evidence to support this view. Thucydides refers to a group of wealthy people kept as prisoners by the Corinthians and then probably bribed, but they do not appear to have gained any support in Corcyra. The trial initiated against them by Peithias ends with their conviction, so that they are forced to find refuge in the temples as suppliants. After that, these men seize the power in the city through an act of violence:

ξυνίσταντό τε καὶ λαβόντες ἐγχειρίδια ἑξαπιναίως ἐς τὴν βουλὴν
ἐσελθόντες τὸν τε Πειθίαν κτείνουσι καὶ ἄλλους τῶν τε βουλευτῶν
καὶ ἰδιωτῶν ἐς ἑξήκοντα

“They banded together and suddenly rushing into the senate with daggers in their hands killed Peithias and others, both senators and private persons, to the number of sixty” (Thuc. III 70. 6).

Not a word is said about any movement of opinion in their favour, not even an attempt made by them to bring the Corcyreans round to their side. The plot is described as a *coup d'état* carried out without the consent of the population by a few men whose position in the island had become difficult in consequence of their previous behaviour. Thucydides does not seem keen to refer to the conspirators as members of the oligarchic party. The terms used are, in fact, non-political: the plotters are addressed as οὔτοι οἱ ἄνδρες (Thuc. III 70. 3), οἱ ἔχοντες τὰ πράγματα (Thuc. III 72. 1), οἱ δὲ (Thuc. III 72. 3), τῶν ἀνδρῶν (Thuc. III 76. 1), τῶν ἐχθρῶν (Thuc. III 81. 2). The only reference to them as members of an

⁴⁴ On the role of the *prostatai* see in particular O.Reverdin (1945, 201-12) and also a note in Marchant (1962, 186). On the political atmosphere in Greece during the war see L.Whibley (1889).

⁴⁵ Cf. A.Fuks (1971, 49 ff.) interprets the stasis as a political strife between the oligarchic and the democratic faction in Corcyra. See also J. De Romilly (1963, 84) and De St.Croix (1981, 547 n.6). A different view is expressed by I.A.F.Bruce (1971, 112) who is not convinced that an oligarchic revolution is taking place in Corcyra.

oligarchy could be the words οἱ ὀλίγοι (Thuc. III 74. 2) used in the course of the description of the stasis, but I wonder if the term could be intended in this case as a reference to the actual *number* of persons involved rather than to a political party or ideology. When the account of events in Corcyra is resumed in the fourth book, the tone of the exposition does not change. Thucydides refers to those of the Corcyreans who after the civil war fled in the mountains and made damaging raids on the city, and, who, after surrendering under terms to the Athenians, were slaughtered by the people of Corcyra. No further identification is offered (Thuc. IV 46-47; cf. IV 2.3). On the other side, the demos of Corcyra is often referred to generally as “the Corcyreans” (οἱ Κερκυραῖοι Thuc. III 78.1, 79.1, 81.2, 81.4). The population as a whole thus seems to be firmly resolved to stay on the side of the Athenians. The same could be said of Book Four where Thucydides speaks of “the Corcyreans” who co-operated with the Athenians and killed the persons who took refuge in the mountains (Thuc. IV 47). Moreover, the naval battle that occurred during the stasis - as described in Book Three- sees the Corcyrean and Athenian ships sharing one front just as the Corinthian and the Spartan ones share the other. No mention is made of any Corcyrean crew who went over to the Spartans and took their side in the conflict (Thuc. III 77). In view of these considerations, it seems possible to postulate that the Corcyrean stasis, as it is presented by Thucydides, should be interpreted as fundamentally an attempted *coup d' état* against the population carried out by a few members of the upper class, perhaps corrupted by the Spartans. Because these men belonged to the wealthy class, the conflict might have been viewed as a manifestation of popular opposition to a group of wealthy people, but our text does not seem to suggest the idea of a conflict between political groups.

If the words used by Thucydides to describe the stasis in Corcyra do not refer to different political parties, where does this common interpretation of the events come from? It is actually in the commentary following the report that the historian speaks for the first time of opposition between parties:

Οὕτως ὡμὴ ἡ στάσις προυχώρησε, καὶ ἔδοξε μᾶλλον, διότι ἐν τοῖς πρώτῃ ἐγένετο, ἐπεὶ ὕστερόν γε καὶ πᾶν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐκινήθη διαφορῶν οὐσῶν ἑκασταχοῦ τοῖς τε τῶν δῆμων προστάταις τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐπάγεσθαι καὶ τοῖς ὀλίγοις τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους.

“To such excesses of savagery did the revolution go; and it seemed the more savage, because it was among the first that occurred; for afterwards practically the whole Hellenic world was convulsed, since in each state the leaders of the democratic factions were at variance with the oligarchs, the former seeking to bring in the Athenians, the latter the Lacedaemonians” (Thuc. III.82. 1).

What one can possibly infer from these words is that the Corcyrean stasis is the first example of vicious internal conflict occurring during the present war. In the course of the war other *staseis* will take place in which democratic and oligarchic political parties will indeed be involved, one favouring the Athenians and the other favouring the Spartans. How much of this political interpretation can be applied to the stasis at Corcyra is hard to say. Because the account of the events involves mention of a pro-Athenian demos and some members of the wealthy class who were pro-Spartan, the stasis could be *subsequently* interpreted as a first example of conflict between political parties⁴⁶, even though the historical facts as recounted in the preceding narrative do not seem to be completely consistent with such an explanation.

It seems useful at this point to pay attention to some historical information contained in chapters 82 and 83. We have said that through this commentary Thucydides presents the stasis in Corcyra as an example of the evils always recurring in the world. The inversions of values mentioned are therefore meant to describe human behaviour in general terms, not just what happened during that particular upheaval. We have also seen echoes of archaic pessimism in this interpretation. However, we have not yet considered from the historical point of view how much of this vivid description of human wrongdoing is actually applicable to the Corcyrean stasis itself. Because such a picture has a generalising character we do not expect perfect consistency with the earlier narrative. Some of the topics covered seem to have only a marginal connection with the events in Corcyra itself. Let us therefore return to these chapters. At chapter 82.6 Thucydides says:

Καὶ μὴν καὶ τὸ ξυγγενὲς τοῦ ἑταιρικοῦ ἀλλοτριώτερον ἐγένετο διὰ τὸ ἐτοιμότερον εἶναι ἀπροφασίστως τολμᾶν· οὐ γὰρ μετὰ τῶν κειμένων νόμων ὠφελίας αἱ τοιαῦται ξύνοδοι, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τοὺς καθεστῶτας

⁴⁶ See for example M.Cogan (1981, 1-21). Cogan's theory that the stasis at Corcyra was of political nature relies on the assumption, derived from III.82.1, that at Corcyra the Athenians were called in by the leaders of the demos, the Spartans by the oligarchs.

πλεονεξία. Καὶ τὰς ἐς σφᾶς αὐτοὺς πίστεις οὐ τῷ θεῷ νόμῳ μᾶλλον ἐκρατύνοντο ἢ τῷ κοινῇ τι παρανομῆσαι.

“Furthermore, the tie of blood was weaker than the tie of party, because the partisan was more ready to dare without demur; for such associations are not entered into for the public good in conformity with the prescribed laws, but for selfish aggrandisement contrary to the established laws. Their pledges to one another were confirmed not so much by divine law as by common transgression of the law ” (Thuc. III 82. 6).

Here there appears to be a reference to the ἐταιρεῖαι, political associations often pursuing subversive aims. It does not seem appropriate to speak of ἐταιρεῖαι in the case of Corcyra. However, these groups were to constitute a serious threat to the stability of the democratic government of Athens in the following years of the Peloponnesian War.⁴⁷ Alkibiades, together with other members of the aristocracy, seems to have been connected with the groups responsible for the Hermae scandal reported by Thucydides in Book Six.⁴⁸ There is evidence for the view that these associations had a religious character: the members formalised their membership through an oath often involving the participation to an awe-inspiring act “which challenged the social order, just as the group may have wanted to challenge the social order in a wider sense”.⁴⁹ Andokides calls this pledge πίστις ἀπιστοτάτη (*And.* 61). The account of the affair of the Hermae in Thucydides’ Book Six stresses these elements as linked to the oligarchic associations. Alkibiades, who supposedly belonged to some ἐταιρεῖαι, is considered dangerous by the Athenians:

“Thinking now that they had the truth about the Hermae, they were far more convinced that the profanation of the mysteries also, in which he was implicated, had been committed by him with the same intent, that is of conspiring against the people (καὶ τῆς ξυνωμοσίας ἐπὶ τῷ δήμῳ ἀπ’ ἐκείνου ἐδόκειπραχθῆναι)” (Thuc. VI 61. 1).

In the previous chapter Thucydides had already mentioned the fact that the population was suspicious (ὑπόπτῃς, Thuc. VI 60) in consequence of the scandal and afraid that a ξυνωμοσία could be organised by these groups: that would be another

⁴⁷ On the ἐταιρεῖαι and their subversive character see the recent work of W.D.Furley (1996). For a history of the Athenian clubs see G.M.Calhoun (1964).

⁴⁸ On the mutilation of the Hermae in relation to the ἐταιρεῖαι see O.Murray (1990, 149-161).

⁴⁹ Cf. W.D.Furley (1996, 59).

ἀλόγιστος τόλμα like the killing of Hipparchus just described by Thucydides in chapter 59.1.

These words seem to me consistent with the description of the political changes as presented in the commentary appended to the Corcyrean stasis in chapter 82. The power of association of ἑταῖροι (τὸ ἑταιρικόν) has proved to be more powerful than family loyalty. This perfectly matches the character of the ἑταιρεῖαι, the πίστις and the subversive elements are also recorded. The atmosphere of suspicion is mentioned at 82.5 and it is worth noting that the same words later used of the tyrannicides (ἀλόγιστος τόλμα, III 82.4) figure here among the dangerous elements of inversion of values.⁵⁰ Thus the events on Corcyra, as presented and interpreted by Thucydides, with their echoes of the words of earlier poets on an already familiar type of disruption, may not only be looking back at the past but also forward to the future and might be said to allude to later events. After all, the part of Hesiod's account of the Iron Race he echoes is a prophecy.

Further considerations give strength to such an idea. The oligarchic revolution of 411 BC is generally considered to be the outstanding example of stasis. It was the one that might have caused the fall of democracy in Athens. The account of the events in Book Eight shows similarities with the description of the stasis in Book Three. Pisander and his companions succeed in abolishing the democratic institutions in various cities; and coming to Athens, they find that most of the business had already been accomplished by the ἑταιρεῖαι (Thuc. VIII 65). They proceed to kill Androcles, προστάτης τοῦ δήμου for two reasons:

Τῆς τε δημαγωγίας ἔνεκα καὶ οἰόμενοι τῷ Ἀλκιβιάδῃ . . . χαριεῖσθαι

“on account of his being a popular leader, and somewhat the more because they thought it would gratify Alkibiades” (Thuc. VIII 65).

This killing is reminiscent of the assassination of Peithias, also a προστάτης τοῦ δήμου in Corcyra, which was also carried out for political and personal reasons.⁵¹ Other killings follow in 411 BC, which are often motivated by personal enmities, with the purpose of eliminating people who might prove inconvenient

⁵⁰ The fact that the τόλμα ἀλόγιστος is found in relation to the assassination of Hipparchus in Thucydides 6.59.1 is also noted by L. Edmunds (1975, 75).

⁵¹ Cf. L. Canfora (1996, 1299).

(ἀνεπιτηδείους, Thuc. VIII 65) and are carried out in secret. At the end of the stasis in Corcyra political motivations were also taken to justify assassinations that were actually private acts of revenge. In chapter 82 Thucydides describes the full effect of that tendency. The oligarchs present their program for the institution of a government run by five thousand men.

“This was only a specious pretext intended for the masses, (εὐπρεπὴς πρὸς τοὺς πλείους)”, Thucydides says. “For the very same men who were endeavouring to change the government were going to have control of the state” (Thuc. VIII 66.1).

The words used in chapter 82 by Thucydides could be regarded as a perfect commentary on such a policy:

“For those who emerged as party leaders in the several cities, by assuming on either side a fair-sounding name (μέτ’ ὀνόματος ἐκάτεροι εὐπρεποῦς), the one using as its catch-word “political equality for the masses under law”, the other “temperate aristocracy” while they pretended to be devoted to the common weal, in reality made it their prize (ἄθλα ἐποιοῦντο).” (Thuc. III 82.8)

The conspiracy that took place in the 411 BC in Athens could be regarded as more carefully executed than the one in Corcyra. No force will be involved and the plotters are said to be ξυνετοί (Thuc. VIII 68. 4), the same word used in chapter 82 in reference to the process of inversion by which “he who succeeded in a plot was clever, and he who had detected one was still shrewder” (ἐπιβουλεύσας τίς τυχὼν ξυνετός, καὶ ὑπονοήσας ἔτι δεινότερος, Thuc. III 82. 5). As a result of the conspiracy the population of Athens lives in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion (Thuc. VIII 67), comparable with that described at the end of chapter 82 in Book III, because nobody knew who was actually part of the plot. Athens is deprived of its liberty, a hard thing to be accepted by a people who: “for more than half of that period had themselves been accustomed to rule over others” (ἄλλων ἄρχειν εἰωθότα) (Thuc. VIII 68. 4).

The process of inversion and wrongdoing begun in Corcyra will continue and will cause the change of fortune and destruction of Athens itself. It is arguable that parts of the commentary attached to the account of the stasis are also applicable as an interpretation of later events, so that we have a further indication of the exemplary

function of this portion of the work.⁵² Overall, the stasis section offers an example of a kind of human misbehaviour which had been recognised by earlier authors, but whose description is analysed with a new rational attitude and conveyed through the use of a new language. The human tendency to wrongdoing will reach its climax in the present generation: the stasis in Corcyra offers indications of tendencies that will be brought to an extreme in the years to follow, and are destined to be the cause of the decline of Athens itself.

Following this range of thoughts, some implications as regards the process of composition of the *History* might be advanced. The hypothesis that sections 82 and 83 allude to events that took place after 427 BC, when the Corcyrean stasis occurred, leads us to suppose that Thucydides might have already experienced the revolution of 411 BC when he composed this narrative. Several scholars have suggested a late date for the composition of chapters 82-83. Grundy supposes that these chapters were written after the fall of Athens⁵³ and Gomme also argues that 82 was written after 413 BC.⁵⁴ Because it is difficult to isolate the commentary from the main narrative concerning Corcyra, it also seems reasonable to suggest that the whole account might have been first presented at a later date. Thucydides might have chosen to present his views on stasis through the medium of earlier events in Corcyra at a time when it was difficult, if not dangerous, for him (or some of his potential audience) to speak about more recent events in Athens, either in 411 BC or after the final defeat.

⁵² Cf. also H.R.Rawlings III (1981, 178 ff.). In line with his theory of the correspondences between different sections of Thucydides, Rawlings demonstrates a similarity between the stasis in Corcyra (III. 70-84) and the revolt in Athens (VIII. 63-98).

⁵³ Cf. G.B. Grundy (1948, 474).

⁵⁴ Cf. A.W.Gomme (*HCT*, II. 372).

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Melian Dialogue Thucydides V 84-116

After the account of the defeat of Cleon, the fifth book of Thucydides includes only one piece of direct speech: the so-called Melian Dialogue. With the exception of the exchanges between Archidamus and the Plataeans in Book IV, this is the only section in Thucydides considered by Dionysius of Halicarnassus to be a dialogue.¹ Owing to the peculiarities of both its structure and its content the Melian Dialogue has been one of the favourite subjects of discussion for Thucydidean scholars. The Dialogue has a central position within the work as a whole. Furthermore, scholars have viewed the arguments presented in it as reaching beyond the requirements of the actual historical circumstances and have concluded that this composition is a vehicle for the author's own reflections on Athenian imperialism.² The exchange is articulated in such a way that it reads like the script of a play; and Westlake has supposed that this piece began life as a "separate minor work" and was subsequently inserted in the fuller *oeuvre*.³ Most recently, Canfora has supposed that the dialogue is detachable from the narrative context of the book in which it is set and is structured as a dramatic performance.⁴ That these scholars should have recourse to such a radical hypothesis is surely an indication of their unease in dealing with this section. The aim of this Chapter is to identify the peculiarities of this text by analysing it from the point of view of its structure and its subject-matter and to see whether there are indeed elements indicating an originally autonomous composition and perhaps even delivery of that composition as a *quasi* dramatic performance.

¹ Cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *De Thuc.* 37.1/388. Hudson-Williams (1950, 166 ff.), among other modern commentators, remarks that the dialogue must be considered a *unicum* in the *History*.

² On this theme see in particular J. De Romilly (1963, 273-310, esp. p. 274).

³ Cf. H. D. Westlake (1968, 317 n.1). See also Westlake (1971, 315-325) where he says bluntly that the Melian Dialogue could be better defined: "as a fiction than as a fact".

⁴ Cf. L. Canfora (1979, 27-44).

STRUCTURE AND FRAME

In considering the structure of the Melian Dialogue it is worth looking at the ideas put forward by Canfora in 1979. Canfora analysed the structure of the Melian Dialogue and detected some structural characteristics, which link our text with dialogues in ancient tragedy.⁵ He suggested that the expression εὐθὺς ὑπολαμβάνοντες κρίνετε at chapter 85 is meant to indicate that the text following will not give any stage directions or indication of speakers' names.⁶ The first time the Athenians take the floor is indicated by οἱ δὲ τῶν Αθηναίων πρέσβεις ἔλεγον τοιάδε "The Athenian envoys accordingly spoke as follows", (84). A corresponding sentence marks the first appearance of the Melians as speakers at the beginning of chapter 86: οἱ δὲ τῶν Μηλίων ξύνεδροι ἀπεκρίναντο "The commissioners of the Melians answered". Canfora supposed that in the first transmission of the following dialogue, the next interventions began without any indication of the speakers' name and that the other speakers' indications were added to the text by later commentators. Canfora further suggested that these later attempts at identification of the speakers were not without controversy. He pointed out that Dionysius, the scholia, and the manuscript traditions are not always in agreement on who says what. Thus Dionysius (*De Thuc.* 38) attributes V 88 to the Athenians whereas in the printed texts it is attributed to the Melians, in accordance with Codex Laurentianus 69.2 and the manuscript tradition.⁷ Canfora supposes that this is not to be considered as a "mistake" by Dionysius, but rather as a reflection of a different distribution of speaker-parts. Moreover, Dionysius considers V 88 to be the beginning of the "dramatic dialogue", that is, the part with the interventions not preceded by the speaker's name, although in our text the change to this form of exposition begins at V 87. Canfora supposes that Dionysius thought of V 86 and 87 together as making up one intervention spoken by the Melians and that is why V 88 is attributed by Dionysius to the Athenians in this way of dividing up the text.

⁵ Cf. L.Canfora (1979, 27-44). A similar idea is advanced by M. Cagnetta (1990, 159-62), who notes that the dialogue resembles a prompt-book for the theatre.

⁶ For the practice followed for the indication of speakers in Greek dialogue texts see N.G. Wilson (1970, 305).

⁷ Cf. Canfora (1979, 29).

“Dionysius and the manuscript tradition” Canfora concludes in summing up his arguments, “provide evidence of a way of dividing the parts between the different speakers which is widely attested and internally consistent, but which is different from the more correct division reflected by speaker attributions in the form of names in the manuscript tradition. However, these speaker attributions in that tradition, in their turn, precisely because they are later, do not correspond to the divisions implied by the text in which they appear! Moreover, these indications do not simply commence at the point where there are no further stage directions (that is from V 87 onwards), as we would expect, but as early as V 85-86, where they are obviously superfluous. This confirms their nature as editorial aids for the reader. And it is possible to go even further. The person who introduced the speaker names that are transmitted by our manuscripts, corrected a traditional, erroneous, distribution of interventions. Originally, the text of the Melian Dialogue was presented without the names of the speakers, and only with diacritical signs according to the practice followed in texts of drama”.⁸

Canfora then concludes that Thucydides did not indicate the speakers’ names in the original text because it was written to be performed by actors. This absence of such indications would only be a problem for a reader, and not for an audience who were listening to a live performance of the dialogue by two different interpreters. Canfora thus supposes that the Melian Dialogue was originally independent of the context of Book Five, and accordingly tries to find where the dialogue could have been inserted in the overall narrative. Analysing the last sentence of chapter 84, which concerns the sending of ambassadors to Melos, and the opening of chapter 114, at the conclusion of the dialogue, he concludes that two sentences originally belonged together and were later split up to allow the insertion of the dialogue into the narrative:

“The Athenian commanders Cleomedes and Teisias, ‘before ravaging the land (πρὶν ἀδικεῖν τι τῆς γῆς, 84.3) at first sent envoys to make proposals to the Melians (λόγους πρῶτον ποιησομένων ἐπεμψαν πρέσβεις, 84.3) as the Melians would not yield, they immediately commenced hostilities’(ὥς οὐδὲν ὑπήκουον οἱ Μήλιοι, πρὸς πόλεμον εὐθὺς ἐτρέποντο, 114.1). The simple sentences reporting the sending of Athenian emissaries to meet the Melian magistrates and their return after the meeting are, as one can see, closely linked with the dialogue. The fact

⁸ Cf. Canfora (1979, 29 ff.): “Dionigi e la tradizione manoscritta attestano una suddivisione degli interventi internamente coerente e ampiamente diffusa, ma diversa da quella più corretta, rispecchiata dalle sigle nominali tramandate. Queste a loro volta proprio perché seriori, non corrispondono alla suddivisione che il testo presso cui figurano implicherebbe! Anzi, queste sigle non compaiono soltanto, come ci si aspetterebbe, a partire da là dove non ci sono più didascalie narrative (cioè da V 87), ma già da V 85 e 86, dove sono evidentemente superflue. Questo conferma la loro natura di *sussidi scolastici per la lettura*. E si può andare oltre: chi introdusse le sigle nominali tramandate dai nostri manoscritti corresse una tradizionale, erronea, distribuzione degli interventi. Dunque in origine il testo del dialogo si presentava *senza sigle nominali*, ma con essenziali segni diacritici, *secondo le consuetudini dei testi scenici*.”

that they can be easily left out, leaving undamaged a context that can be so easily reconstructed, is perhaps further confirmation that the dialogue was inserted, without much effort, into the overall narrative (and the insertion took place where it was most possible, where the sending of the representatives is mentioned). However, it is worth noting that the insertion of the dialogue into the narrative created a small inconvenience: two phrases that were originally meant to be correlated are separated and left very far apart by this arrangement *πρῶτον ἔπεμψαν...ὥς<δ’>οὐδὲν ὑπήκουον*, etc. In this way *πρῶτον* becomes absolute and jars next to *πρίν*.⁹

However, this procedure of isolating and conjecturally reconnecting two pieces of Thucydides’ narrative looks pretty mechanical. Moreover, according to this reconstruction the only section to be performed would have been the dramatic exchange, and that would imply that no background historical explanations on the event was provided for a potential audience. We have argued in previous chapters, that when an originally independent section comes to be part of a larger narrative unity, the insertion quite often contains historical information, which is already present in the fuller work, but which would have been necessary in order to facilitate an audience’s understanding of a single event or to make clear the author’s point of view at a separate performance of that one section.¹⁰ On some occasions, as in the case of a contemporary Athenian audience, the public would already have known that historical background through direct knowledge of the events, but it is difficult to suppose that that would always have been the case with every audience. It seems reasonable to imagine that such self-contained accounts were composed with a view to performance before audiences in a variety of places and at different times, as must have happened with the Homeric poems or the *λόγοι* of Herodotus. For audiences outside Athens, for example, more information on the historical background might have been necessary. As background information of this kind is given at the beginning of our

⁹ Cf. Canfora (1979, 34-5): “<<Gli strateghi Cleomede e Tisia, prima di saccheggiare il territorio (*πρίν ἀδικεῖν τι τῆς γῆς* 84.3) in un primo momento mandarono legati per trattare (*λόγους πρῶτον ποιησομένους ἔπεμψαν πρέσβεις* 84.3), poiché però i Meli non si piegavano (*ὥς <δ’>οὐδὲν ὑπήκουον οἱ Μήλιοι* 114.1) subito aprirono le ostilità.>> Le semplici frasi che riguardano l’ammissione dei legati ateniesi al cospetto dei magistrati di Melo (fine di V 84) e il loro rientro sono, come è chiaro, strettamente legate al dialogo: che possano essere omesse lasciando in piedi un contesto che così agevolmente si ricompone è forse un’ulteriore conferma del fatto che il dialogo fu immesso, senza molto sforzo, nel racconto (e lo fu nel punto più ovvio, là dove si parla dell’invio dei legati). Semmai si può rilevare che l’immissione del dialogo nel racconto ha determinato un lieve inconveniente: ha fatto risultare lontanissimi e non più collegati due termini che dovevano essere correlati: *πρῶτον ἔπεμψαν ...ὥς <δ’> οὐδὲν ὑπήκουον*, etc... E così *πρῶτον* è rimasto assoluto e stride accanto a *πρίν*”.

¹⁰ Cf. our discussion at chapter four on the Mytilenean debate in Thucydides III 35-50.

account, it is conceivable that at least some of this information could have been connected at an earlier stage to an originally independent piece on Melos.

In chapter 84 Thucydides reports that the Athenians made an expedition against the island. He states the number of men and ships involved, with both allies and islanders taking part, and offers an explanation of how the conflict began. He then returns to the actual campaign and names the *strategoi* holding command in the present occasion. Connor has noticed that the practice of piling up reports of different events in a few sentences is a characteristic of a compressed style which is widespread in Book Five.¹¹ However, in our case one might also add that the compression creates an exposition that is difficult to follow, something that is contrary to the author's normal practice. Looking at chapter 84.2 we find that it is said that the Melians are colonists of the Spartans and unwilling to obey the Athenians like the other islanders. The text then follows:

ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον οὐδετέρων ὄντες ἡσύχαζον, ἔπειτα ὡς αὐτοὺς ἠνάγκαζον οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι δηοῦντες τὴν γῆν, ἐς πόλεμον φανερόν κατέστησαν.

“At first, they remained quiet as neutrals; then when the Athenians tried to force them by ravaging their land, they went to war openly” (Thuc. V 84.2).

This sentence has raised problems of interpretation because the statement that in 416 BC Melos was at open war with Athens contrasts with the position taken by the Melians during the dialogue, when they defend their right to remain neutral. Gomme and Graves advance a logical explanation: V 84.2 would not be related to the present events of 416, but rather to the previous expedition against Melos conducted by Nicias in 426 BC, which has already been recounted in III 91.¹² If we accept this interpretation, we can dismiss the idea of any inconsistency between different parts of the account. Moreover, we would find that the background historical information given at the beginning of the narrative was not essential for the comprehension of the following story, though it could be useful in order to give an audience an advance explanation. The Melians' link with the Spartans was known from Herodotus, who

¹¹ Cf. W.R.Connor (1984, 147).

¹² Cf. A.W.Gomme-A.Andrewes (*HCT*, IV, 156-158) and C.E.Graves (1908, 224). R. Meiggs (1972, 386) as regards V 84.2 writes: “Thucydides is not here referring to operations in 416 BC because open hostilities are then preceded by a debate behind closed doors”.

calls the Melians “Lacedaemonian stock” (Μήλιοι μὲν γένος ἑόντες ἀπὸ Λακεδαιμόνος, Hdt. VIII 48) and the further reference to the previous expedition completes this brief background survey of the Melian events worth mentioning. Nevertheless, V 84.2 remains awkwardly joined to the context and it is possible that, if a further revision of the section had occurred, Thucydides would have decided to modify or omit this sentence.

However, that is not the only part of this introduction, that raises difficulties. Chapter 84 begins with a reference to Alcibiades’ campaign of March 416 BC against Argos. Thucydides gives in a very few lines an overall view of the expedition and reports the forces deployed. The events occurring on Melos in 416 are then introduced: καὶ ἐπὶ Μήλον τὴν νῆσον Ἀθηναῖοι ἐστράτευσαν ναυσὶν ἑαυτῶν μὲν τριάκοντα... (“the Athenians also made an expedition against the island of Melos with thirty ships of their own”,....Thuc. V 84.1). As we see, the Melos campaign is not provided with a special introduction of its own; it is linked to the preceding narrative with the use of καί. As in the case of the reference to Alcibiades’ expedition just above, information is immediately given on the military forces involved. The facts concerning Melos are stylistically presented as one more military episode, forming part of a series of events occurring during that year, which the author briefly mentions in order to maintain an accurate report of what happened at the time. The reader of a continuous text knows that Thucydides has just briefly touched in the fifth book on the Athenian conquests of Torone and Scione¹³ and nothing in these introductory words would lead him to expect that Melos would receive any more attention.¹⁴ This sentence might well be traced back to an early stage of composition of the full *History*, at which a self-contained account on the conquest of Melos and negotiations preceding it were still not part of the overall work, and this event did not receive any more attention than other similar Athenian campaigns conducted during this period. If the historian decided at a later time to insert the Melian *logos* in the *History*, these words might have been viewed as the natural point for connecting our account to the work. And in fact, a connection would be more likely to have been made at this point. However, this routine narrative is immediately followed by the information on what is taken to be the previous military campaign against Melos

¹³ Cf. Thuc. V 3.3 (Torone) and V 32 (Scione).

¹⁴ See W.R.Connor (1984, 147-8), who notes that Thucydides’ account of one of the most notorious atrocities in war begins in a “routine way”.

conducted by Nicias, material which, as we have argued, is not at all at ease with the surrounding context.

I therefore offer another explanation for the difficulties posed by V 84.2. This passage may have been part of the original beginning, which was necessarily brief, of an independent exposition and been later inserted at this point inside the overall work. The two sections V 84.1 and V 84.2, belonging to two different stages of composition, would then have been joined together and it is possible that the difficulties we face arose from an incomplete revision by Thucydides of this part of his work.

Analogous considerations may follow from an analysis of the structure of Thucydides' narrative at the end of the dialogue. The introductory words at chapter 84 are followed by an ἀγών between the representatives of Melos and Athens. The exchange exhibits highly dramatic elements, which will be studied later in this chapter. The Athenian warning that Melos will be destroyed is the climax of the episode and concludes the dialogue. But such a dramatic flavour ends with the conclusion of this debate. It is possible to suppose that if this text had ever been performed as a dramatic dialogue, the curtain would have fallen, so to speak, at the end of the exchange.¹⁵ As sometimes in tragedy, the coming ruin is foretold, rather than being brought directly on the stage. Moreover, the following narrative presents once again a routine manner of exposition that clashes with the tragic atmosphere that has been created through the debate. It is said that "as the Melians would not yield" the Athenian generals "immediately commenced the hostilities"(Thuc. V. 114.1) and a wall was built around the city. In contrast with the large space devoted to the Melian Dialogue, the conquest of Melos, the direct consequence of the position taken up by the islanders during the debate, is not presented as a particularly noteworthy event. Moreover, Thucydides reverts to the practice of giving a chronological report and intertwines the account of the events at Melos with a report of Alcibiades' campaign at Argos as he previously did in chapter 84. Melos is no longer a central theme deserving special attention, and returns to the status it had had in chapter 84 when it was at first mentioned together with another

¹⁵ Cf. the last book of the *Iliad* (XXIV, v. 725 ff.): during the Funeral Rites, Andromache makes a lament over the body of Hector and prophesies the impending fall of Troy: πρὶν γὰρ πόλις ἥδε κατ' ἄρκης πέρσεται..., "for ere that shall this city be wasted utterly..."(v.728). The dramatic forecast enhances the tragic atmosphere of the concluding part of the *Iliad*. This overall picture seems similar to the atmosphere created at the end of the Melian dialogue.

military campaign. The siege itself is not described in many words and then, at chapter 116, the final act of conquest is finally reported in very few words:

Οἱ δὲ ἀπέκτειναν Μηλίων ὅσους ἡβῶντας ἔλαβον, παῖδας δὲ καὶ γυναῖκας ἡνδραπόδισαν· τὸ δὲ χωρίον αὐτοὶ ὥκισαν, ἀποίκους ὕστερον πεντακοσίους πέμψαντες.

“The Athenians thereupon slew all the adult males whom they had taken and made slaves of the children and women. But the place they then peopled with new settlers from Athens, sending thither at a later time five hundred colonists.” (Thuc. V. 116.4)

These words are similar to the expressions used as regards the Athenian conquest of Scione and the Spartan occupation of Hysiae, actions that both are noticed *quasi* incidentally in the *History*.¹⁶

Περὶ δὲ τοὺς αὐτοὺς χρόνους τοῦ θέρους τούτου Σκιωναίους μὲν Ἀθηναῖοι ἐκπολιορκήσαντες ἀπέκτειναν τοὺς ἡβῶντας, παῖδας δὲ καὶ γυναῖκας ἡνδραπόδισαν, καὶ τὴν γῆν Πλαταιεῦσιν ἔδοσαν νέμεσθαι

“About the same time during this summer, the Athenians reduced the Scionaeans by siege, slew the adult males, made slaves of the women and children, and gave the land to the Plataeans to occupy” (Thuc. V 32.1)

καὶ Ὑσιᾶς χωρίον τῆς Ἀργείας λαβόντες καὶ τοὺς ἐλευθέρους ἅπαντας οὓς ἔλαβον ἀποκτείναντες ἀνεχώρησαν καὶ διελύθησαν κατὰ πόλεις.

“And they (the Spartans) also seized Hysiae, a place in Argive territory, slew all the free men whom they caught, and then withdrew and dispersed to their several cities” (Thuc. V 83.2)

This brief but detailed way of reporting the sack of a city is reminiscent of the generalising description employed in the appeal to Meleager by his wife Cleopatra in the *exemplum* narrated by Phoenix in *Iliad* IX.¹⁷ It is possible that the intervening

¹⁶ See also Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*On Thuc.*, c. 15) who criticises Thucydides for referring in very few words to some acts of conquests like Scione: “He touches lightly on human sufferings and by sheer brevity reduces them to insignificance”.

¹⁷ See Homer *Iliad* IX 590-94.

καὶ τότε δὴ Μελέαγρον ἐύζωνος παράκοιτις
λίσσεται ὀδυρομένη, καὶ οἱ κατέλεξεν ἅπαντα
κῆδε, ὅς ἄνθρωποισι πέλει τῶν ἄστῳ ἀλώη·
ἄνδρας μὲν κτείνουσι, πόλιν δέ τε πῦρ ἀμαθύνει,
τέκνα δέ τ' ἄλλοι ἄγουσι βαθυζώνους τε γυναῖκας.

chapter 115 was written at a time when the Melian dialogue had not yet been inserted in the overall work and Melos had not yet received any more attention than Scione or Hysiae. The routine form of exposition in chapter 115 would then be attributable to a earlier stage of composition as we supposed for the beginning of chapter 84. Together these two passages might represent the original frame in which the dialogue itself would later be inserted. If Thucydides had carried out a further revision of his work, perhaps these inconsistencies would not any longer have been visible.

THE SUBJECT

After presenting evidence in favour of the possible earlier independence of the Melian Dialogue from the body of Book Five, the next task is to study the dialogue itself. First we shall highlight the motifs touched on in the course of the exchange and their arrangement and see whether any relation can be detected with Greek texts meant to be performed. Secondly, we shall try to understand the reasons why this particular exchange might have been chosen for a performance and have offered any special interest to an audience.

One of the features most often noticed in the dialogue is its dramatic setting.¹⁸ Most commonly it is said that the contrast between the two opposing positions expressed by the speakers creates a dramatic impact.¹⁹ Liebeschuetz and Cornford²⁰ notice a dramatic irony: the attack on Melos is presented as an action that Athens must carry out in order to defend and assert her hegemonic role in Greece. In vain, the Melians warn the Athenians of the dangers that might arise from such crude imperialistic

“Then verily his fair-girdled wife besought Meleager with wailing, and told him all the woes that come on men whose city is taken; the men are slain and the city is wasted by fire, and their children and low-girdled women are led captive of strangers” (Text and translation from A.T.Murray (1924)). For other parallels proposed between our dialogue and the Homeric texts see also S.Nannini (1989, 21-31), who argues for a similarity between the Melian Dialogue and the fight between Hector and Achilles in the *Iliad*.

¹⁸ See in particular the articles of C.W.Macleod (1983, 140-158); J.H.Finley (1967, 1-54); F.W.Walbank (1960, 216 ff.); B.L.Ullman (1942, 25-53), L.Canfora (1995, 181-192). For the tragic character of Thucydides' history in general see F.W.Walbank (1960, 216 ff.), B.L.Ulmann (1942, 25-53), L.Canfora (1995, 181-92), G. Cajani (1980, 21-28).

¹⁹ Cf. F.M.Wasserman (1947, 18-36); G.Ferrara (1956, 335-346); M.A.Levi (1953, 5-16) and M.Cagnetta (1990, 159-62).

²⁰ W. Liebeschuetz (1968, 73-77); F.M. Cornford (1907, 174-87).

behaviour. As a matter of fact, history will prove the Melians right, and not many years after the destruction of their island Athens will experience defeat and its consequences. Regenbogen and Rawlings²¹ go further and suggest that Thucydides might have had an eye to the overall structure of his work when he decided to insert the Melian Dialogue in Book Five; he might have wanted to set this tragic exchange in a central position within the whole work as it now stands. It has also been speculated that another tragic exchange related to the fall of Athens itself at the end of the work might have been originally intended to counterbalance our account.

Another line of interpretation points out the abstract nature of ideas expounded in the course of the dialogue. Hudson Williams, Amit and De Romilly²² note that the arguments raised during the exchange are not always strictly consistent with the historical context; parts of this discussion would be more at home in a sophistic dialogue. This view usually leads to the conclusion that the debate cannot be considered reliable historical evidence: “The dialogue itself,” De Romilly writes, “is as much Thucydides’ own work as one of Plato’s dialogues is one of his own works”.²³ Macleod, too, stresses the sophistic motifs in the dialogue and argues that the words pronounced by the Athenians are generated by Thucydides’ own consummate historical analysis.²⁴ These ideas may sound more or less convincing, but in order to assess the main characteristics of the dialogue it seems better to look directly at the text.

At chapters 85 and 86 the Athenian envoys and the commissioners of the Melians are introduced to speak. As we have noticed on other occasions, although Thucydides mentions the presence of various speakers on both sides, the exchange has to be imagined as a dialogue between only two spokesmen, one from each party.²⁵ It is possible that this was the way in which the discussion took place at the time, nonetheless the decision to present only two interlocutors who, as we will see, embody two opposing ideological views, lays the foundation for a tragic confrontation as in a dramatic *ἀγών*.²⁶ Moreover, right from the beginning of the discussion it is clear that

²¹ O. Regenbogen (1933, 9 n.13); H.R. Rawlings III (1981, 243-9).

²² Hudson-Williams (1950, 156-170), M.Amit (1968, 216-35), J.De Romilly (1963, 273-310).

²³ Cf. J.De Romilly (1963, 274).

²⁴ Cf. C.MacLeod (1983, 52-67, esp. 62-3).

²⁵ For this way of introducing the speakers see our discussion on Thucydides’ presentation of the Plataean trial (III . 52-68) in chapter five. S.Hornblower (1987, 52) notes that mentioning the names of the representatives increases our trust in the report as authentic.

²⁶ On the structure of the ancient *ἀγών* see J.Duchemin (1968), C.Collard (1975, 58-71) and J. Myres (1948, 199-231).

both sides do not have an equal say. “We see”, the Melians say at chapter 86, “that you are come to be yourselves judges of what is to be said here [...] if we refuse to yield there will be war for us, whereas if we are persuaded servitude”. In other words, the Athenians have the dominant role and, in the absence of a fair discussion, the Melians will have to speak as if they were defending themselves. A similar situation is often presented on the Athenian stage: one of the two characters engaged in a tragic debate is also the arbiter of the decision and his position of superiority over his opponent makes it more difficult for the opposing party to succeed. As a result, the dramatic effect is enhanced.²⁷ A further confirmation that the Athenians have the dominant position comes from the fact that it is they who determine the form the ensuing discussion will take. “Take up each point”, they say to the Melians, “and do not you either make a single speech, but conduct the enquiry by replying at once to any statement of ours that seems to be unsatisfactory...” (Thuc. V 85). The Melians had already chosen not to bring the envoys from Athens before the popular assembly alleging, as the Athenians remind them: “that the people may not hear, in an uninterrupted speech, arguments that are seductive and untested, and so be deceived”. So now *they* are denied the possibility of pronouncing a long ῥῆσις. It is clear that the choice of the dialogue form is to the disadvantage of the Melians. Because a long speech is ruled out, they do not have the chance of carefully selecting and arranging the arguments in their favour. Moreover, they cannot make any appeal to pity.²⁸ Plato will later point out how a long speech is inimical to proper discussion. In the *Protagoras* Socrates accuses Protagoras of “teaching others to speak about the same things at such a length that words never seem to fail” (Plato, *Prot.* 334. E). “If you want to hear me and Protagoras discoursing”, Socrates remarks, “you must ask him to shorten his answers and keep to the point, as he did at first: if not, how can there be any discussion? For discussion is one thing, and making an oration is quite another, in my humble opinion.” (Plato, *Prot.* 336. B). Again, in the course of the discussion on the art of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*, βραχυλογία is said to be in opposition to ἐλεεινολογία, “pitiful speech” (Plato, *Phaed.*, 272 A).

²⁷ Cf. J. Duchemin (1968, 128).

²⁸ For a contrary view see the interpretation of Wassermann (1947, 20): “Thucydides expects his readers to ask why he introduces a dialogue instead of a pair of speeches. This is the reason for his presenting it as a suggestion from the Athenians”.

The Athenian proposal to state the points does not lead to a real discussion. The two parties have diametrically opposed views on the interpretation of the issues raised. At first, the Athenians claim to speak according to the criterion of justice:

ἐπισταμένους πρὸς εἰδότας ὅτι δίκαια μὲν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρωπείῳ λόγῳ ἀπὸ τῆς ἴσης ἀνάγκης κρίνεται, δυνατὰ δὲ οἱ προύχοντες πράσσουσι καὶ οἱ ἀσθενεῖς ξυγχωροῦσιν.

“You know as well as we know that what is just is arrived at in human arguments only when the necessity on both sides is equal, and that the powerful exact what they can, while the weak yield what they must.”(V 89)

It is clear that the Athenians are speaking of what they think is just from their own point of view and that according to this view the Melians ought to act purely in accordance with mere necessity and yield to the stronger party. The same concept also appears in a speech by Pericles (I 76) as part of his explanation of why a state holding hegemony needs to use its power. But the point is that such an idea has nothing to do with “justice” and in fact the Melians recognise that this argument is *παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον* and linked rather to expediency (*τὸ ξυμφέρον*, V 90). As a result of this disagreement on the idea of *δίκαιον*, the Melians proceed to speak of *expediency*. *Τὸ ξυμφέρον*, they say, involves facing dangers in the defence of the common good (*χρήσιμον ...τὸ κοινὸν ἀγαθόν ...τῷ αἰεὶ ἐν κινδύνῳ γιγνομένῳ*, V 90). But even on the concept of expediency the Athenians do not share this view. According to them *ὠφελία* needs to be related to the preservation of their Empire, and this is the only valid reason for taking risks (*κινδυνεύσθαι ...ἐπ’ ὠφελία*, V. 91). As the exchange proceeds, it is made clear that the two contenders speak from different ideological standpoints. *Δίκαιον* is for the Melians a moral value, while for the Athenians it is equated with what is safe (*ἀσφάλεια*) for their own city (V. 92-7). Persuading the Athenians to change their opinion is not possible, and the Melians therefore claim to speak from the point of view of Athens’ own interest. An attack on Melos, they say, might provoke other cities to revolt against Athens, cities that would never have thought of becoming her enemies before, and this would act against Athens’ security (*ἀσφάλειαν*, V 98). Again, the Athenian reply is negative: these people are not dangerous to the Empire, but rather those who dwell in some of the islands (V 99). Since acting as advocates of the Athenians’ best interest evidently

produces no positive effect, the Melians take the contrast back to the realm of ideals. “For us”, they say, “it would be the height of baseness and cowardice not to resort to every expedient before submitting to servitude” (πολλὴ κακότης, V 100). The Melians’ argument is again rejected: “No, not if you take a sensible view of the matter; for with you it is not a contest on equal terms to determine a point of manly honour, so as to avoid incurring disgrace...rather the question before you is one of self-preservation...” (Οὐκ, ἦν γε σωφρόνως βουλευήσθε· οὐ γὰρ περὶ ἀνδραγαθίας ὁ ἀγὼν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἴσου ὑμῖν, μὴ αἰσχύνῃν ὀφλεῖν, περὶ δὲ σωτηρίας μᾶλλον ἢ βουλῇ,... V 101).

So far the Athenians have dismantled all the different arguments raised by the other side in their defence. The last resource for the Melians is to appeal to all that was left in Pandora’s box: hope. “For us”, they declare, “to yield is at once to give up hope (ἀνέλπιστον); but if we make an effort, there is still hope (ἐλπίς) that we may stand erect”(V 102). “Hope is indeed a solace in danger”, the Athenians reply, “and may lead to true destruction people who trust her” (V 103.1). The Melians insist on defending this point: their confidence is not so irrational because they are “god fearing men standing their ground against people who are unjust” and they are confident in receiving help from Sparta (V 104). Once again their arguments are rejected. Athens declares her own confidence in divine favour and some space is devoted to an attempt to convince the Melians that Sparta will not intervene in their support (V 105-109). At this point no ground for defence is left and the Melians therefore resort to an extreme utterance: if Sparta will not directly intervene, there are others whom they might send. They could also attack Athenian territories or try to get at any of the allies not already got at by Brasidas (V 110.2). But the Athenians deny this possibility and affirm that these are merely “cherished hopes” (V.111.2). A final pair of speeches ends the dialogue. The Melians are invited to reconsider their position but they confirm their determination to resist. Their attitude is the same as it was at chapter 86, at the beginning of the exchange:

Οὔτε ἄλλα δοκεῖ ἡμῖν ἢ ἅπερ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον, ὧ Ἀθηναῖοι, οὐτ’ ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ πόλεως ἑπτακόσια ἔτη ἤδη οἰκουμένης τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἀφαιρησόμεθα...

“Men of Athens, our opinion is no other than it was at first, nor will we in a short moment rob of its liberty a city which has been inhabited already seven hundreds years”(V 112)

The reply of the Athenian ambassador could not be more eloquent. As we have seen, the last word pronounced in the dialogue is σφαλήσεσθε (V 113).

As emerges from this report of the Melian dialogue, the way in which both sides expound their own arguments enhances the dramatic character. Setting on the stage two speakers embodying two contrasting ideological views would not be so dramatic if both parties had been able to articulate their arguments at length. Instead, the Athenians attack each point the Melians have raised in their defence; words or expressions advanced by the islanders are repeated and considered from an opposite ideological basis and are dismantled one by one. This opposition is stylistically enhanced by the fact that the Athenians’ replies are couched in negative terms, except in chapter 113. Even their belief that they share the favour of the Gods is introduced with an adversative particle: ὅμως δὲ πιστεύομεν τῇ μὲν τύχῃ ἐκ τοῦ θείου μὴ ἐλασσώσεσθαι (V 104). We should notice that the more the Melians are exposed to a close attack, the more they have to resort to arguments of defence that are extreme and therefore also less convincing and effective. Some critics have pointed out that the Melians’ claim that Sparta will intervene in their favour (V.104 ff.) seems historically improbable: it is difficult to imagine that, at that time, Sparta would have committed herself to engage in open conflict against Athens for the sake of Melos.²⁹ Moreover, the Spartans had not shown any sign of intervening when the Melians were first attacked in 426 BC. From the historical point of view this argument is certainly not well founded, and, in fact, it is immediately rejected by the other side (V.105). It is difficult to imagine that the Melians were not aware that a Spartan intervention was at least improbable. We may therefore suppose that the reason why they chose to raise the subject is rather because they were left with no other suitable arguments. Their

²⁹ Cf. A.W. Gomme - A. Andrewes (*HCT*, IV. 175). The Melians declare that Sparta is their “ally”. This claim has roused not a few critical problems because it seems to be in contrast with their claim to be “neutral”. Gomme notes that the presence of the word *ἑυμμάχια* does not prove the existence of a formal alliance. L.Canfora (1996, 1342-46) favours the idea that an alliance between Sparta and Melos could have existed at that time. But he also notes that in 416 BC during the peace, the idea that Sparta might intervene in favour of Melos is completely outside reality (p.1346). Canfora points out that Thucydides did not refer to this alliance in his own presentation of the facts and in this way succeeds in putting the Melians in a good light (p.1346).

trust in some help from Sparta must be regarded as a resort to groundless assertion coming after their proper points of defence have all been rejected.

After Sparta, the Melians predict a mortal threat to Athens and her remaining imperial power (V.110).³⁰ Many scholars have considered these words as a *post eventum* Thucydidean consideration, a sort of forecast inserted into the dialogue and not arising from the actual occasion. This would entail supposing that the section was composed after the actual fall of Athens and obviously this would cast doubt on the historicity of the whole Dialogue.³¹ This suspicion could be avoided if we could explain the sentence in its context and were able to show it to be something that the Melians themselves could have said then. The prediction follows a series of desperate and unsuccessful attempts by the Melians to persuade their opponents. The dialogue is now moving towards its tragic finale: having failed to persuade the Athenians, the Melians have recourse to threats: a future defeat of Athens is a threat, perfectly explicable as the climax of a tragic ἄγών. On the hypothesis that this dialogue was performed either after the Sicilian disaster or the fall of Athens, these words would certainly have been taken as a tragic forecast, but we simply do not know whether Thucydides wrote these words after Athens' defeat and thus at a time when the prediction would sound like a true prophecy ignored. However, considered within its own context and without reference to later historical events, they are dramatically appropriate as an extreme and desperate attempt at defence. In reply the Athenians urge the Melians to stick to the point and not indulge in "vain speculations": the argument does not either convince or frighten them. Their response is also appropriate, since in 416 BC Athens is still too far away from the idea of a future final defeat to be persuaded by such an argument. A declaration that they will persevere in their resistance ends the Melians' last speech (V. 112): not being able to move the adversary, the defenders go back to what was their original position in chapter 84. The end is identical with the beginning as if the exchange had not taken place at all.

³⁰ Compare the situation at the end of Euripides' *Hecuba* (v. 1259 ff.). Polymestor will be soon punished by Agamemnon for being a guest-murder. Polymestor confronts Hecuba in a final dramatic stichomythia, where he prophesies the terrible fate that awaits her and Agamemnon. Here, as in the Melian Dialogue, the person who is going to be punished provokes the opponents with a final and desperate threat.

³¹ For opinions in favour of a late date of composition for the dialogue see J.De Romilly (1963, 274 ff.), V.Bartoletti (1939, 302), H.Rawlings III (1981, 243 ff.), F.M.Wasserman (1947, 35). Against, A.Andrewes (1960, 3 ff.), R. Meiggs (1972, 387) and C.MacLeod (1983, 64): who find the arguments advanced in support of a late date inconclusive.

Discussion of Athenian imperialism is not a topic that Thucydides has introduced for the first time with the Melian Dialogue. The Athenian representatives' speech at the Spartan assembly, in Book One (73-8), and Pericles' last speech in Book Two (60-4), both deal with Athenian claims to hegemony. The rule that the weaker is held down by the stronger implied in V 89, is also expounded in I 76.2. The idea that it is better to risk attracting hatred rather than to be merciful in order to retain one's power had been already advanced by Pericles at II 64.2. One of the closest parallels to our dialogue is the Mytilenean debate in Book III chapters 35-50, where a similar discussion is conducted on the concepts of justice and expediency. The words pronounced by Cleon on that occasion are consistent with the position held by the Athenians during the Melian Dialogue.

Πειθόμενοι μὲν ἔμοι τά τε δίκαια ἐς Μυτιληναίους καὶ τὰ ξύμφορα ἅμα ποιήσετε, ...εἰ γὰρ οὔτοι ὀρθῶς ἀπέστησαν, ὑμεῖς ἂν οὐ χρεῶν ἄρχοιτε. Εἰ δὲ δὴ καὶ οὐ προσήκον ὁμῶς ἀξιοῦτε τοῦτο δρᾶν, παρὰ τὸ εἰκός τοι καὶ τούσδε ξυμφόρως δεῖ κολάζεσθαι, ἢ παύεσθαι τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀκινδύνου ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι.

“If you take my advice, you will do not only what is just (τά δίκαια) to the Mytileneans but also, at the same time, what is expedient (τά ξύμφορα) for us...for if this people had a right to secede, it would follow that you are wrong in exercising dominion. But if, right or wrong, you are still resolved to maintain it, then you must punish these people in defiance of equity as your interest require; or else you must give up your empire and in discreet safety practice the virtues you preach” (III 40.4).

Athens' interest comes before any appeal to justice and may well conflict with the possibility of behaving honestly (ἀνδραγαθία). Cleon's position seems very close to what will be said at Melos, but the outcome will be different.³² At the time of the Mytilenaeen affair, even if Mytilene committed an act of revolt against Athens, it did not undergo the severe punishment at first proposed. The matter was reconsidered and Cleon's harsh proposal failed to gain the vote. Eleven years after that, it is no longer possible to hold a public debate on the position that Athens should take towards her allies. Melos had not even revolted from Athens, she claims the right to retain her

³² W.R.Connor (1984, 255-6) notes the similarities in the form chosen by Thucydides for arranging the arguments expounded in the course of the Plataean Trial, Mytilenaeen Debate and Melian Dialogue. F.M. Cornford (1907, 174 ff.), on the other hand, argues that Thucydides chose the dialogue form for the Melos debate because he did not want to create a parallel with the Mytilenaeen debate.

neutral role, but that neutrality itself is now out of the question. Although harsh measures had been advocated before, in 416 BC Athens does not have the possibility to hold a debate with a view to considering an alternative course of action. A further reason why open discussion is replaced by a dialogue, is therefore that a fair and open debate at the assembly in Athens was no longer a concrete historical possibility. The agenda is now set by the Athenians and the choice of the dialogue form helps to highlight the drastic change of general policy that has to come about.

Bearing this perspective in mind we are now able to detect other dramatic characteristics in our text. Let us consider retrospectively an audience listening to the exchange at a time close to that of the actual event and therefore with no knowledge of what Athens would experience in the years to come. This public could not have interpreted some parts of the dialogue as a confirmed forecast of the defeat of Athens, as modern critics seem to do, but they were surely already able to see to what extent the words of the Athenians were not in keeping with the traditional values they used to defend. We have seen that at V 101 the Athenian emissaries dismiss the Melians' choice as based on a sense of honour (ἀνδραγαθία), which will lead them to ruin. But ἀνδραγαθία itself is not a negative attitude; it is a virtue. It is the merit shown by those Athenians who died in battle and whom Pericles celebrates in his Funeral Oration (II 43.3) and it is the policy followed by the people of Athens when they reject Cleon's advice against ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι (III 40.4) and save the Mytilenaeans from complete destruction. The Melians' mistake lies not in defending a line of behaviour that is wrong in itself, but in advocating honour in a dispute with the Athenians. In other words, their mistake is to claim for themselves values that were traditionally Athenian at a time when Athens itself is no longer able to keep faith with her promises and practice honourable conduct.³³ Other parts of the dialogue further confirm this line of interpretation. We have seen that the Athenians advise the Melians to yield: they are weaker than Athens (the contest is not between equals) and it would be wiser to accept Athens' proposal rather than be destroyed. In reply, the Melians state their firm intention to resist: they will not run away from danger and will keep their trust in the gods and in hope. Athens herself had once been engaged in a similar debate on the

³³ F.M. Cornford (1907, 183) points out the double occurrence at V 111.3 of the word ἀίσχύνη once being used in the moral sense of dishonour and once referred to the disgrace of being beaten. Cornford comments: "The speaker is not conscious of any change of meaning; he has lost all sense of the difference between honour and success, dishonour and defeat".

necessity, or otherwise, of yielding to the stronger during the Persian Wars, as Herodotus recounts in Book Eight; but here her position is different.³⁴ Alexander of Macedon brings a message from the King of Persia. The king invites Athens to accept his offer of becoming allies of Persia; because they are weaker, he says, they will not be able to resist. Athens should be wise and not imagine she is equal to the King. Alexander supports this suggestion and argues that it is in Athens' best interest. When the Spartans hear of the King's proposal, they send ambassadors to Athens, who try to dissuade the Athenians from accepting the offer. It would not be right or honourable, they say, for those who started the war and claim to be the liberators of Greece to reach an understanding with the Persians. But Athens' reply firmly reassures them: Athens will not accept any offer coming from Persia, they will rather fight with all their strength as long as they can. They trust the Gods and the heroes and advise Alexander to desist calling on the Athenians to act unjustly. This passage reflects what must have been the Athenians' propaganda during the Persian Wars: it presents that image of Athens as defender of justice and the oppressed as it was still celebrated by Pericles in his Funeral Oration in 431 BC. But now, the defence of high values is undertaken by the Melians, not the Athenians. They are the ones who claim to act righteously, who are confident of the Gods' support, who are willing to fight to the point of their own destruction.³⁵ A public contemporary with the events must have been struck by Athens' shift to a position so distant from the one she had maintained during the Persian Wars. This opposition to the past must have been viewed as a sign of decay in itself; as a result this very exchange of roles is highly tragic and dramatic. The irony in Athens' now adopting such a view emerges clearly from the reaction of Dionysius of Halicarnassus:

ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ οἶομαι τοῖς ἐκ τῆς εὐνομωτάτης πόλεως ἐπὶ τὰς ἑξω πόλεις ἀποστελλομένοις ἡγεμόσι ταῦτα προσήκειν λέγεσθαι, οὐδ' ἂν ἀξιῶσαιμι τοὺς μὲν μικροπολίτας καὶ μηδὲν ἔργον ἐπιφανὲς ἀποδειξαμένους Μηλίους πλεονα τοῦ καλοῦ ποιεῖσθαι πρόνοιαν ἢ τοῦ ἀσφαλοῦς καὶ πάντα ἐτοίμους εἶναι τὰ δεινὰ ὑποφέρειν, ἵνα μηδὲν ἀσχημον ἀναγκασθῶσι πράττειν, τοὺς δὲ προελομένους τὴν τε χώραν

³⁴ Cf. Hdt. VIII c. 142 ff.

³⁵ The Athenians also say they are confident of having the favour of the Gods (V 105.1-2), but God's favour is here needed in order to support an act of destruction. Gomme (*HCT*, IV, 173) associates this passage with Hdt. VIII 143 and comments: "You have the Gods on your side whether you are resisting the almost irresistible might of Persia or advising the Melians of the folly of resisting the might of Athens. Herodotus' world was indeed very different from that of Thucydides".

καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἐκλιπεῖν κατὰ τὸν Περσικὸν πόλεμον Ἀθηναίους, ἵνα μηδὲν αἰσχρὸν ὑπομείνωσιν ἐπίταγμα, τῶν ταῦτ' αἰρουμένων ὡς ἀνοήτων κατηγορεῖν. οἶομαι δ', ὅτι καὶ εἰ τινες ἄλλοι παρόντων Ἀθηναίων ταῦτα ἐπεχείρουν λέγειν, ἐπαχθῶς ἤνεγκαν ἂν οἱ τὸν κοινὸν βίον ἐξημερώσαντες.

“I do not think that such arguments as these would be fittingly used by the leaders of the city with the best laws in the world when they are on mission abroad, nor should I expect the inhabitants of a tiny state like Melos, who never did anything to distinguish themselves, to prefer the nobler to the safer policy and to be prepared to undergo every kind of suffering in order to avoid the necessity of a discreditable course of action; while the Athenians, who during the Persian War chose to leave their land and their city rather than submit to any base imposition, accuse them of being senseless when they follow the same principles. I think that if anyone else had attempted to express these views in the presence of the Athenians, the latter, who had civilised the life of all mankind, would have been offended.” (De Thuc., c.41)³⁶

Thus the Athenians would have been greatly embarrassed by the Melians' arguments now that they themselves were assuming the role of the oppressor in order to defend their empire, a position traditionally disavowed by the Greeks. Oppression is quite often associated with an act of ὕβρις, which normally calls for retribution.³⁷ Let us consider, for example, the words pronounced by Darius in Aeschylus' *Persians*. Darius' ghost is informed by Atossa that the Persians have been utterly destroyed at Salamis and he forecasts that Xerxes' whole army will encounter many difficulties in their retreat because in their act of conquest they have offended the Gods :

Οὐ σφιν κακῶν ὕψιστ' ἐπαμμένει παθεῖν,
 ὕβρεως ἄποινα κᾶθέων φρονημάτων. [...]
 τοιγὰρ κακῶς δρᾶσαντες οὐκ ἐλάσσονα v.813
 πάσχουσι, τὰ δὲ μέλλουσι, κοῦδέπω κακῶν
 κρηνὶς ἀπέσβηκ', ἀλλ' ἔτ' ἐκπιδύεται. [...]
 ὕβρις γὰρ ἐξανθοῦσ' ἐκάρπωσε στάχυν v.821
 ἄτης, ὅθεν πάγκλαυτον ἐξαμᾶ θέρος.

“Here it awaits them to suffer their crowning disaster
 in requital for their presumptuous pride and impious thoughts [...]

³⁶ Text and translation from S.Usher (1974). Cf. the different view expressed by Isocrates, who defends Athenian policy towards Melos and Scione. He argues that the states who remained loyal subjects did not experience these disasters and that it is not possible to keep under control many different states without disciplining those who commit offences (*Panegyricus*, 101-102).

³⁷ Cf. also the considerations advanced by F. M. Cornford (1907, 182) and W.Liebeschuetz (1968, 73 ff.) on the *hybristic* attitude shown by the Athenians at Melos.

Wherefore having evil wrought, evil they suffer in no less measure;
and other evils are still in store; not yet quenched is the spring
of their woes but it still wells forth. [...]
For presumptuous pride, when it has burgeoned, bears as its fruit a crop of calamity,
whence it reaps a plenteous harvest of tears". (Aesch. *Pers.* vv.807 ff.)³⁸

Thucydides does not pass any direct judgement about the Athenians' behaviour towards the Melians, but creates a dialogue in which Athens can be seen as acting contrary to traditional Athenian values. On the other side, the Melians, in uttering warnings of a future fall of Athens, play the same role of warner as Darius in the *Persians*. With our knowledge of later events we could also add that the defeat that Athens will already suffer in Sicily will prove the Melians to be right, just as the Persians' defeat at Plataea will confirm Darius' forecast. However, as we have already seen, the idea of an interrelationship between the Melians' warning and Athens' defeat in Sicily, often formulated by critics, entails an assumption that Thucydides already knew the events following the conquest of Melos at the time when he composed the dialogue. Though that is possible, it does not appear to be completely necessary. Of course, an audience hearing or reading this text *after* that event would have seen in that disaster the true consequence of the Melian warning. It seems also quite reasonable to suppose that when arranging his material at a later time, Thucydides decided on reflection to place the Melian dialogue just before the account of the Sicilian expedition: in this way the consequential train of these events would have highlighted his tragic interpretation of the course of History. On the other hand, if we take into account the situation and atmosphere directly connected with the time when the Melian campaign was actually fought, we might be able to detect the provenance of certain other elements in our narrative.

In 416 BC the Sicilian expedition, although not yet begun, was in the air: Thucydides tells us that during the same winter when Athenian forces concluded the destruction of Melos (V.116.2), in Athens the population was discussing the possibility of subduing Sicily (VI. 1). Because of the dangers involved in this campaign many opposing views must have been put forward at the time. Besides Thucydides' work³⁹, Euripides' *Trojan Women*, performed at the Great Dionysia of 415 BC, the year after the Melos campaign and in that March when the Athenian

³⁸ Text and translation from H. Weir Smyth (1946).

³⁹ Cf. Thucydides' report of Nicias and Alcibiades' speeches (VI. 9-14, 20-24 and 16-19).

assembly took the final and fatal decision to undertake the Sicilian enterprise, might give us some indications of the atmosphere in Athens during these months.⁴⁰ The play deals with the events following the destruction of Troy and relates the fate awaiting the victims of the conflict. Through the description of the pitiful death of Astyanax, killed by the victor because he was a son of Hector, and the slavery imposed on the Trojan women, Euripides narrates the horrors provoked by war and destruction of cities. L. Parmentier and H. Grégoire note that the recent campaigns against Torone, Scione and Melos “expliquent assez l’esprit et la tendance de la trilogie troyenne”.⁴¹ The *Trojan Women* does not pay tribute to the victor: the humanitarian eye of Euripides looks with sympathy on the fate of the victims: “Une tragédie qui est”, as Parmentier and Grégoire wrote, “à la fois un *gloria victis* et un *vae victoribus*”.⁴² However, pity for the victims cannot be separated from a negative judgement passed on the oppressor. Poseidon, announcing the ruin that awaits the Achaeans, exclaims:

μῶρος δὲ θνητῶν ὅστις ἐκπορθεῖ πόλεις,
ναοὺς τε τύμβους θ', ἱερὰ τῶν κεκμηκότων,
ἐρημιά δούς αὐτὸς ὦλεθ' ὕστερον.

“The man who sacks cities, temples and graves, the sacred places of the dead, is a fool. Having given them over to devastation, he himself perishes later” (vv. 95-98)

This idea is one of the main themes of the *Trojan Women* and will be recalled in different form by Hecuba later on:

θνητῶν δὲ μῶρος ὅστις εὖ πράσσειν δοκῶν
βέβαια χαίρει· τοῖς τρόποις γὰρ αἱ τύχαι,
ἔμπληκτος ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ἄλλοτ' ἄλλοσε
πηδῶσι, κούδεῖς αὐτὸς εὐτυχεῖ ποτε.

“That man who imagines he is secure in his prosperity and rejoices is a fool. For our fortunes have a habit of leaping in different directions like a capricious man, and no one is ever happy of his own accord”(vv.1203-6)⁴³

⁴⁰ For the date of the *Trojan Women* (Dionysia 415) see K.H.Lee (1976,X). For the date of the Dionysia at the end of March see Oxford Classical Dictionary (1996, 3rd. ed.) s.v. “Dionysia”. For the date of the Athenian deliberation, see K.J.Dover (1965, 13).

⁴¹ Cf. L.Parmentier and H. Grégoire (1925, 16).

⁴² Cf. L.Parmentier and H.Grégoire (1925, 17).

⁴³ Text and translation from the *Trojan Women* are from the Loeb edition.

Cassandra warns that φεύγειν μὲν οὖν χρή πόλεμον ὅστις εὖ φρονεῖ: “The man of sense should avoid war”(v.400). Helen is accused of having caused the destruction of Troy through her desire to satisfy her luxurious tastes and enjoy the wealth of Troy (vv.996 ff.). I wonder if these words, pronounced on the stage in the spring of 415, at a time when the Athenians were deliberating on the proposal to sail against Sicily, a land blessed with extraordinary opulence as Thucydides notes and as Euripides also affirms in this same play⁴⁴, might be intended as an indirect warning against this enterprise.

The *Trojan Women* appeals to the traditional values rooted in Athenian culture. The ideas that conquest and destruction, although necessary, are an act of barbarity and that wrongdoing will lead to retribution go back to Homer, and are motifs widely expounded in tragedy. However, encouraging a discussion of this kind at Athens in 415 BC, after the Athenians had utterly destroyed small cities and before they started the Sicilian expedition, might have sounded like a serious warning. P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, in his study of the interrelationship between the dramatic poets and the expedition to Sicily, argues that in writing the Trojan trilogy, Euripides indicates his fears about the Sicilian expedition. It is not only linked to Melos, but also to the anxieties for possible disasters which might happen to those who dare too much. The satiric play *Sisyphus*, which ends the trilogy, is said to be an “interesting choice of subject” because the story of the vain effort made by Sisyphus who rolls a stone which will always fall down again, is “a symbol of a ponderous and useless task which will never be completed”.⁴⁵

Trojan Women covers most of the topics we have found in the Melian Dialogue in Thucydides. Finley had already noted parallels between these two texts and some more could be advanced.⁴⁶ The Melians, like the Trojan captives, play the role of the defenders of justice against a domineering power. The speech of Cassandra (vv.352 ff.) celebrates the fate of those Trojans who died in defence of their own country. Like the Melians, they chose to sacrifice their lives for their city. The killing of Astyanax is an act of unjustified violence against an innocent. Hecuba accuses the Greeks of having forgotten their own values and of being afraid of a person who could not do

⁴⁴ Cf. Thuc. VI 8 and Eur. *Troad*. vv. 205-29.

⁴⁵ Cf. P.G.Maxwell-Stuart (1973, 398).

⁴⁶ Cf. J.H.Finley (1967, 38 ff.) Finley parallels the attitude expressed in the prologue of the *Trojan Women* (esp. 95-97) with the atmosphere of impending calamity present in the Melian dialogue. And also Thuc. V 100 and *Tro.* v. 728 ff., V 93 and *Tro.* vv.729-739, V 105.1-2 and *Tro.* 886.

them any harm (v.1161 ff.), a position very close to the Melian charges against Athens of perpetrating an unjustified attack against a neutral and innocent city. But what still more invites us to associate the two texts is the presence of the same appeal to idealism against the brutality of war, the pity inspired for the oppressed and the fears they instil for the fate of the oppressor. Euripides seems to allude to Athens' decay and to fear that her policy of expansion will lead his own city to ruin. His anxiety springs from the historical context of these years of war. It is rooted in his recognition that the Athenians' confidence of future success seems to ignore the real possibility that fortune is subject to changes and excess may lead to disaster. In 415 BC the tragedian could not have had any knowledge of what would eventually happen in the years to come: the insistence on the idea that even the victors might be vanquished cannot be a prophecy of the disaster at Syracuse (or the much later fall of Athens), but invokes a concept deeply rooted in Athenian culture which should function as a warning. Thucydides seems to be conveying the same message in the Melian Dialogue. Besides the correspondence between Euripides' and Thucydides' texts, both authors stress similar motifs and fears that spring from the political context of the years preceding the Sicilian expedition.⁴⁷ Both these accounts are perfectly understandable as composed and performed at this time.

One of the questions that could follow from our interpretation concerns the importance of the Melian campaign itself. Could this military action have been considered so important as to arouse so much attention among contemporaries?

Cornford, for example, thinks that the Melian dialogue is extraordinary because the action against Melos ought not to be considered a particularly important military event.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the fact that the Athenians called on a large number of islanders to join in the campaign (V.84.1) might suggest that the action itself was not considered to be a minor event at the time. Moreover, the reference to the "Melian famine" (λίμω Μηλίω, *Birds*, v. 186) in Aristophanes seems to allude to an act of conquest whose harshness was sufficiently well known to become proverbial.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ As regards the motifs in the Melian Dialogue, L. Canfora in his commentary on Thucydides (1996, 1337 ff.) has drawn attention to an interesting parallel between this text and the account in the Book of Kings (II 18. 13-37) on the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC. The arguments in both accounts present interesting correspondences and develop *typical motifs*. On possible parallels between the Bible and Thucydides see also our discussion on the description of the plagues in Thucydides and in Scripture at chapter three.

⁴⁸ Cf. F. M. Cornford (1907, 174).

⁴⁹ A. Sommerstein (1987, 210) argues that this reference to Melos in *Birds* implies that Aristophanes expects his audience to feel no moral qualms despite the fact that the campaign had been so cruel. A

Canfora and before him Jaeger drew attention to a passage in Xenophon's *Hellenica* in which reference is made to the Melian campaign.⁵⁰ As final defeat looms, Athens becomes more and more afraid of experiencing in retaliation the same wrongs as she herself had done to other cities:

ὥστ' ἐκείνης τῆς νυκτὸς οὐδεὶς ἐκοιμήθη, οὐ μόνον τοὺς ἀπολωλότας πενθοῦντες, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἔτι αὐτοὶ ἑαυτούς, πείσεσθαι νομίζοντες οἷα ἐποίησαν Μηλίους τε Λακεδαιμονίων ἀποίκους ὄντας, κρατήσαντες πολιορκίᾳ [...] Λύσανδρος δὲ ἀφικόμενος εἰς Αἴγιναν ἀπέδωκε τὴν πόλιν Αἰγινήταις, ὅσους ἐδύνατο πλείστους αὐτῶν ἀθροίσας, ὡς δ' αὐτως καὶ Μηλίοις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσοι τῆς αὐτῶν ἐστέροντο. ...ἐνόμιζον δὲ οὐδεμίαν εἶναι σωτηρίαν εἰ μὴ παθεῖν ἃ οὐ τιμωρούμενοι ἐποίησαν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν ὕβριν ἡδίκουν ἀνθρώπους μικροπολίτας οὐδ' ἐπὶ μιᾷ αἰτίᾳ ἕτερα ἢ ὅτι ἐκείνοις συνεμάχουν.

“(After Aegospotami) no one in the city slept that night, and they mourned not only for the dead, but much more still for themselves, thinking that they would suffer what they had done to the Melians, colonists of the Lacaedaemonians...”(*Hel.*, 2.2.3)

“Lysander went to Aegina and gave back the city to the Aeginetans, as many of them as he could collect, and did the same for the Melians and whoever else had been deprived of their land. (...) (The Athenians) thought that there was no safety, but they would suffer what they have done themselves, not in retaliation, but through *Hybris* when they wronged men of small cities for no other reason that they were allies with the Peloponnesians”. (*Hel.* 2.2. 9-10)

If Xenophon, who was a young man when Athens fell, singles out Melos along with Aegina as notorious crimes for which the Athenians fear reprisal after defeat, then the Athenians are likely to have been aware of the moral wrong and political risk at the time and these acts would remain present in the minds of all Greeks throughout the war and long afterwards.

similar view is expressed by N.Dunbar (1995, 195-6). Also in *Acharnians* (vv. 729-835) the starving Megarian is made object of a joke by Aristophanes although Athenian forces had invaded and ravaged the Megarid twice a year since 431 BC. It is often a problem to decide when a comic passage is to be interpreted as a mere and blunt boast and when it might reflect or seek to excite feelings of misgiving among the audience.

⁵⁰ Cf. L.Canfora (1996, 1307), who also refers to W.Jaeger (1939, 204, n. 12).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the course of this study I have been trying to advance a new approach to the understanding of Thucydides. While the mainstream of scholars engaged in studying Thucydides' text focus on the innovative character of his work, I have attempted to demonstrate to what extent the *History* may still be viewed as a work permeated by, and in part dependent on, the cultural context of his time. Although my approach is more backward- than forward-looking, it is not intended as a contradiction of the view of Thucydides as an innovator, but rather to counterbalance interpretations along those lines by an acknowledgement that he also was in many ways a traditionalist. New attitudes and old schemes often coexist in the *History* as it is well exemplified, for example, by his description of the plague in Athens (Chapter Three).

Looking back, we can see that Thucydides could not avoid contacts with his great predecessor Herodotus. We have seen how widely Herodotean touches are spread in the *History* and we have dealt with some instances in which Thucydides' text may presuppose the work of Herodotus. Although our analysis has only focused on the actual Herodotean character of a whole *logos* in the case of the Pausanias and Themistocles excursus (Chapter One), similar influences may also be at work in other parts of the *History*. For example, the excursus on Harmodius and Aristogeiton, would be worth examining from the same point of view.

As the reader will have noticed the different Chapters point to different kinds of influences identifiable in Thucydides' *History*. Our study of the Funeral Oration has revealed the affinity of this speech with other classical examples of the genre, and also the presence in it of Tragic and Pindaric motifs (Chapter Two). The description of the Plague, on the other hand, shows how Thucydides is able to combine traditional topics with a rationalistic and innovative way of writing. There, Thucydides captures and holds the attention of his public by exploiting the astounding and emotive character of the disease, while at the same time he develops an exposition that has many points in common with orally delivered works on medicine produced in his own time (Chapter Three). Rhetorical features are most in evidence in the Mytilenaeen Debate (Chapter Four) and the Plataean Trial (Chapter Five). The speeches of Cleon and Diodotus are constructed in a manner that agrees with rhetorical precepts attested

in the fourth century, and they are then set within an immediate narrative context in which the encouragement of false expectations creates emotion and suspense. At the same time enough information is provided within the episode to enable an audience of an independent recital of it to follow the developments of events (Chapter Four). Similar techniques of composition are employed in the Plataean Trial. Here the dramatic effect arises from the contrast between the perfect specimen of a defensive plea offered by the Plataeans and the implacable indifference of the Spartan judges (Chapter Five). There is a different tone, again, in his account of the Corcyrean stasis. This upheaval gives him another opportunity to combine traditional ways of thinking with a new form of exposition so as to create a piece of modernised wisdom literature (Chapter Six). Finally in the Melian Dialogue we have seen how Thucydides is willing to go into direct competition with tragic drama (Chapter Seven).

Throughout this study I have tried to highlight how Thucydides' way of writing is capable of variations and attests the influence of several different literary genres. Our study does not pretend to be exhaustive but simply suggests a kind of interpretation that could find further applications in his work.

One question that might be raised at this point is whether the presence of literary influences undermines the overall historical value of Thucydides' *oeuvre* as *History*. My own answer is that we do not know, just as Thucydides himself may not have known any other way of composing a work of history. When modern theories and even Lucian's little treatise on how to write history were still in the distant future, Thucydides set out to write a work of history in accordance with what he must have thought were the best criteria, criteria suggested by his own personal approach, but inevitably rooted in the time in which these had been formulated. If we accept the thesis that the various literary influences detectable in his work and the performability of single self-contained units within it are not fortuitous, but rather reflect his conscious intentions, we have recognised at least part of the cultural heritage that helped to shape his work.

One question that arises from this study and awaits a full answer is when and where it would have been possible to perform self-contained parts of the *History* and how they were eventually incorporated in a overall work. Thucydides certainly travelled after his failure to save Amphipolis and, *pace* Canfora (see Introduction ad fin.), he probably was an exile, as he himself affirms at V.26, from Athens. During

these travels he says he had the opportunity to collect information from people with very different points of view. While he may not have needed to support himself or earn hospitality by recitals of any of these self-standing pieces, it is surely likely that the first presentations were an oral one even if before more select audiences than Herodotus had had. It is further conceivable that the different episodes we have analysed are each treated in accordance with the potential for a particular literary treatment, these being within the range of the literary culture of the sort of audience that would be sympathetic to or attracted by his underlined attitude to the events he was recording. Hornblower has already hypothesised that the account of the stasis at Corcyra could have been performed at symposia and the structural characteristics together with the links we have found with wisdom literature would confirm such an idea (Chapter Six). Similarly the Funeral Oration in which Pindaric elements and wisdom literature are associated can be conceived as not only appropriate to Pericles' audience and perhaps also reflecting much of that original speech, but also, within its immediate narrative and descriptive setting, as of interest to audiences in other parts of Greece. However, it is not possible in any single case to form a properly grounded hypothesis on the possible occasions on which a piece might have been performed.

Although other individual units with peculiar characteristics might be singled out in the overall work, our enquiry, as far as we have been able to take it, appears to point to one further consideration. The sections we have seen as self-contained units coincide with parts of the work that are normally excerpted for teaching purposes. The Funeral Oration, the Melian Dialogue or the Mytilenaeon Debate, for example, are familiar as pieces read by themselves in schools or universities. I suggest that this is not fortuitous, but reflects a convenient self-contained character originating from independent performance or publication.

If such self-contained units did once exist, Thucydides must have subsequently made them integral parts of his final text. This must have involved eliminating inconsistencies and repetitions and linking them up with the rest of the text. In my study I have argued that precisely these signs of inconsistencies detectable in particular sections may be evidence of imperfect revision. At the same time, while the absence of such structural imperfections in many other places might appear to speak in favour of a continuous composition, it may be that in those places the author had been more successful or had chosen to devote more effort to perfecting

his revision. Sometimes, however, it is possible to observe what seem to have been originally independent pieces brought together as themes in the overall work in a significant and effective way. I am thinking in particular of the episode of the Mytilenaeen Debate, where clear traces of an original self-contained structure and inconsistencies in its integration within the overall work coexist with striking and obviously conscious links with other parts of the full *oeuvre*. Cleon echoes Pericles and the Athenians' conduct over Mytilene contrasts with the Spartans' over Plataea and with their own later conduct over Melos.

Throughout this study I have regarded the *History* as the work of Thucydides. Whatever the role posthumous editing may have played cannot be discussed in a study which is speculative enough already, and would in any case not affect my arguments as regards inconsistencies in an integration of the individual parts into the final work.

The *History of the Peloponnesian War* that Thucydides left behind must thus be considered not only as a record of events and a survey of information, but also as a work of art exhibiting great versatility. The present study suggests one way in which that versatility may have found expression and been developed during the author's own lifetime.

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